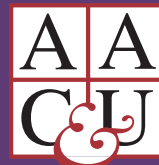


STEP UP & LEAD FOR *Equity*

What Higher Education Can Do to
Reverse Our Deepening Divides



SINCE 1915

"Given our union in a democracy committed to liberty, opportunity, and justice for all, the equity divides that deface our educational system raise questions both at home and abroad about the meaning and integrity of America's democratic promise The deep educational divides that reflect and perpetuate inequality will take concerted, systemic, transforming action to overcome."

– Carol Geary Schneider

CONTENTS

Land of Opportunity . . . for Whom?	2
Economic Vitality Depends on Expanding Educational Opportunity	2
Democratic Ideals Depend on Expanding Educational Opportunity	3
Taking the Lead on Equity and Opportunity	4
What Does It Mean to Be Equity-Minded?	4
Changing Demographics, Deepening Economic Divides	5
U.S. Students Will Very Soon Be Majority Students of Color	6
Deep Economic Gaps Persist for Latinos and African Americans	7
Completing College Improves Economic Mobility	8
America's Future Depends on Closing Attainment and Achievement Gaps	9
Wanted: Problem Solvers and Innovators	10
Wanted: Critical Thinkers and Communicators	11
College Pays Powerful Economic and Social Benefits	12
Access to Quality Learning Is Inequitable at All Levels	13
The Face of Higher Education Is Changing	14
Too Few Low-Income Students Complete College	15
Too Few Students of Color Complete College	16
Inequities in College Readiness	17
Inequities in Access to Resource-Rich Institutions	18
Inequities in Spending per Student	19
Inequities in Educational Opportunities in College	20
Income Disparity Does Not Account for Racial and Ethnic Gaps	21
It Is Time to Act: What College Leaders and Faculty Can Do	22

Land of Opportunity . . . for Whom?

For generations, the United States has promised universal access to opportunity. It is part of our history and the engine of our economic and civic prosperity. But opportunity in America continues to be disproportionately distributed.

The effects of this imbalance are evident. We have persistent gaps in education, income, and wealth, and these gaps are widening as our nation becomes more diverse. As a result, the middle class is shrinking, and the fastest-growing segments of our population are the least likely to have the opportunities they need to succeed.

Expanding access to quality education is key to making opportunity real for all. It is key to closing America's deepening divides, strengthening the middle class, and ensuring our nation's vitality. Yet at all levels of U.S. education, there are entrenched practices that reinforce inequities—and that lead to vastly different outcomes for low-income students and for students of color. We are failing the very students who must become our future leaders.

Higher education can no longer leave this issue unattended. It is our responsibility to the students we serve as well as to our democracy and the nation's economy. It is time for higher education to step up and lead for equity.

Economic Vitality Depends on Expanding Educational Opportunity

The United States cannot thrive unless all Americans are fully enfranchised—prepared to contribute to our economy

and engage effectively in our democracy. And that means restoring the American middle class even as the profile of the U.S. workforce is changing.

Today, well-paying, low-skill jobs are disappearing, and in turn, America's economic polarization is increasing. The American middle class, once among the most affluent in the world, has both shrunk and become poorer relative to the middle classes in other developed nations.¹

The decline of the middle class coincides with decreased economic mobility because educational and economic opportunity are so closely intertwined. In 1970, for example, 65 percent of Americans lived in a middle-class neighborhood, and today that figure has dropped to 42 percent. This change “limits access to quality schools and jobs for struggling people of all races.”²

At the same time, America's demographic diversity is growing—and the fastest-growing populations are the ones who typically have the least educational and economic opportunity.

The only path to economic success—for both individuals and the nation—is to be more intentional and equitable in our efforts to provide quality learning opportunities. We must expand access to high-quality postsecondary education, particularly to the kind of broad, integrative, and applied liberal learning needed for success in today’s workplace. Higher education cannot close the educational gaps by itself. But it can take a leadership role, on campus and in our communities, in addressing the issue honestly, constructively, and aggressively.

Democratic Ideals Depend on Expanding Educational Opportunity

Deep, persistent, and unacceptable inequities in education begin in pre-K and continue through higher education. The results of these systemic barriers to educational success are evident, for both low-income students and students

of color, in uneven higher education enrollment rates, dissimilar college experiences, and lower levels of degree attainment.

Higher education has a special role to play in addressing the historically entrenched inequities that affect low-income students and students of color. These inequities directly contradict our democratic ideals, yet persist at institutions across the country.

Challenging this status quo requires being conscious of the ways higher education currently mirrors, rather than remedies, inequity. It involves providing leadership that guides colleges through frank, sometimes uncomfortable, conversations. It involves partnerships with our communities as well as actions on campuses. And it demands a deep commitment to making changes that ensure that *all* students have access to quality learning opportunities.

“Of all the civil rights for which the world has struggled and fought for 5,000 years, the right to learn is undoubtedly the most fundamental.”

— W.E.B. Du Bois

Taking the Lead on Equity and Opportunity

Equality is about sameness; it focuses on making sure everyone gets the same thing. *Equity* is about fairness; it ensures that each person gets what he or she needs.

This distinction is especially important in education, where there are visible gaps in opportunities and outcomes for large numbers of students. Historically, low-income students and students of color have been excluded from too many opportunities in higher education, and today's policies, expectations, and unspoken rules perpetuate the problem.

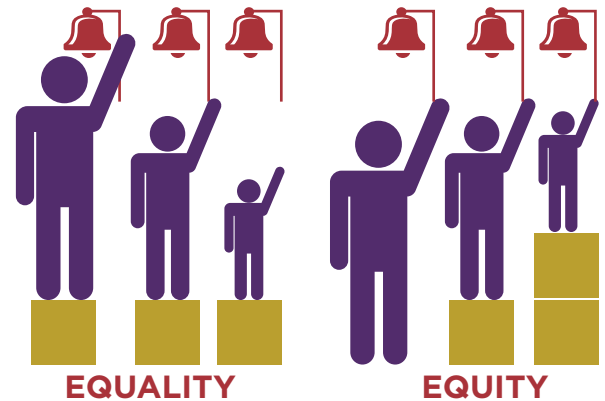
To effectively educate today's students, higher education must focus on both equity and quality—to make the most empowering forms of college learning available to *all* students. Such an approach begins with *equity-minded leaders* who make it a priority to build new opportunities for low-income students and students of color.

Equity-Mindedness³

Equity-minded leaders are aware of the historical context of exclusionary practices in higher education and recognize the impact of this history. They recognize the contradiction between the ideals of democratic education and the social, institutional, and individual practices that contribute to persistent inequities in college outcomes.

Equity-minded leaders also reject the ingrained habit of blaming inequities in access, opportunity, and outcomes on students' own social, cultural, and educational backgrounds.

Most important, equity-minded leaders use this mindset to act for change. They recognize the need for systemic transformation, starting in school and continuing in higher education, to make quality learning for the nation's underserved students a shared priority. They invest their time, effort, and political capital into discussing these issues and mobilizing institution-wide efforts and community partnerships to address them.



What Does It Mean to Be Equity-Minded?⁴

Equity-minded practices are created through

1. Willingness to look at student outcomes and disparities at all educational levels disaggregated by race and ethnicity as well as socioeconomic status.
2. Recognition that individual students are not responsible for the unequal outcomes of groups that have historically experienced discrimination and marginalization in the United States.
3. Respect for the aspirations and struggles of students who are not well served by the current educational system.
4. Belief in the fairness of allocating additional college and community resources to students who have greater needs due to the systemic shortcomings of our educational system in providing for them.
5. Recognition that the elimination of entrenched biases, stereotypes, and discrimination in institutions of higher education requires intentional critical deconstruction of structures, policies, practices, norms, and values assumed to be race neutral.⁵

Changing Demographics, Deepening Economic Divides

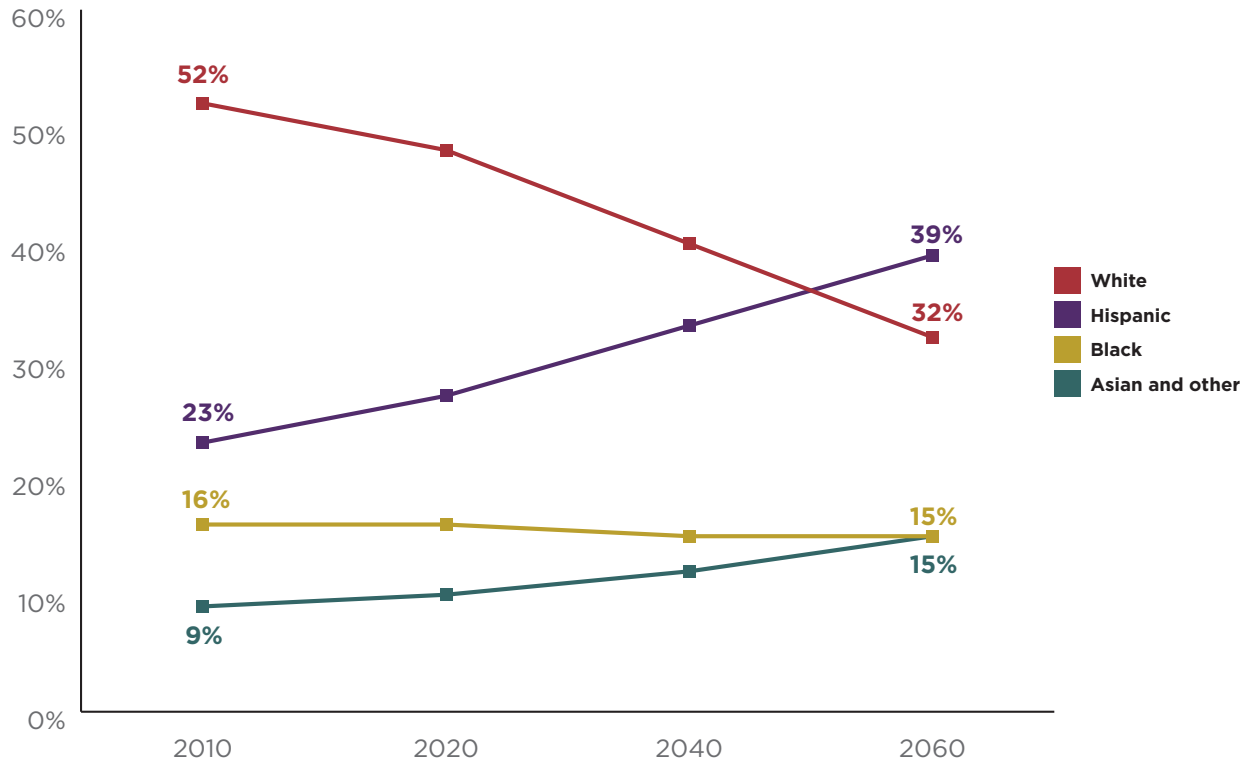
A decorative wavy line separates the red upper section from the purple lower section. It consists of a white line with a gold shadow effect, curving across the width of the page.

U.S. Students Will Very Soon Be Majority Students of Color

The demographics of the U.S. population are shifting. The workforce and citizenry of each new generation have a greater proportion of people of color. Older workers are retiring, and younger workers are increasingly coming from communities that have historically been underserved by our educational system. U.S. education must evolve to better serve the students who will be tomorrow's workers, community members, and leaders.

Public elementary and secondary school enrollment, 2010–2060 (projected)

PERCENTAGE OF ENROLLED STUDENTS



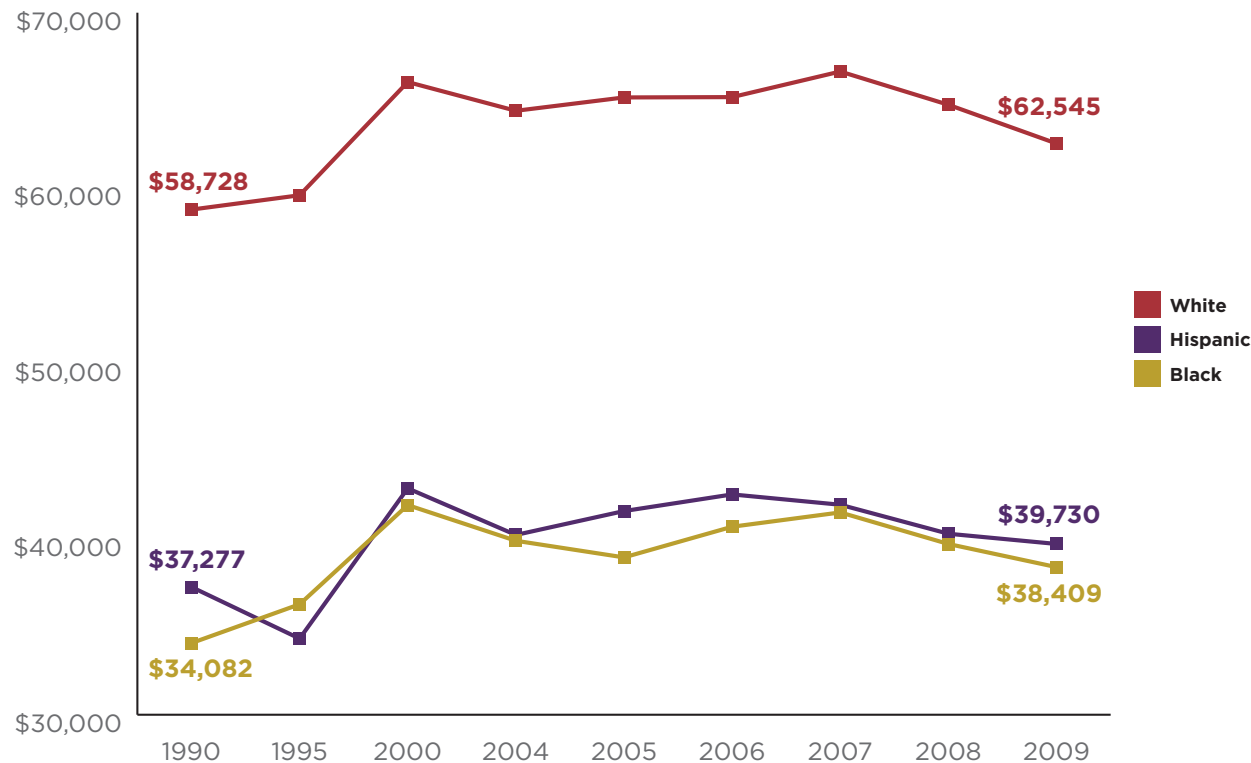
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "2010 Census of the Population, National Projections, 2012-2060, Current Population." As presented in Steve Murdock, "Population Change in the United States and Texas: Implications for Education and Socioeconomic Development" (SHEEO National Meeting, The Grove Hotel, Boise, ID, July 10, 2014).

Deep Economic Gaps Persist for Latinos and African Americans

The education gap for Latinos and African Americans is accompanied by an income gap. We cannot attain our nation's goals unless everyone has an authentic opportunity to contribute to our economy and to engage in our democracy. Our nation's success depends on having a quality higher education system that extends the advantages of liberal education—and the potential for economic prosperity—to all students.

U.S. income levels for white, Hispanic, and black families

MEDIAN INCOME IN CONSTANT (2009) DOLLARS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Statistical Abstract of the United States," Income, Expenditures, Poverty, and Wealth Table 697, <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0697.pdf>.

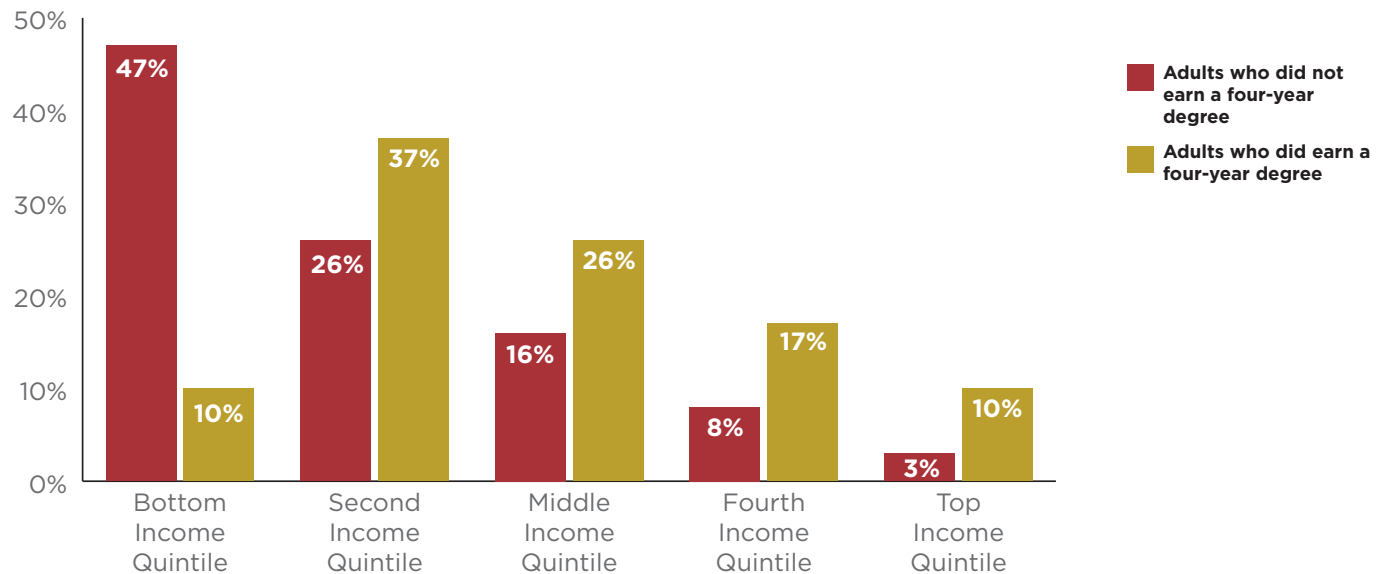
Completing College Improves Economic Mobility

Educational opportunity and economic success are intertwined. People with higher incomes are more likely to enroll in college—and then more likely to earn the higher incomes that allow their children to attend college. And for children of low-income families, a college degree can provide the means to move out of poverty.

How a four-year degree affects the adult income of people who were born into poverty

This chart looks at income levels of adults who were born into deep poverty based on whether they earned a college degree. All adults included in this chart were born into the bottom income quintile (the lowest fifth of U.S. household incomes). Among these adults who were born into deep poverty, only 10 percent of those who earned a four-year degree remained in the bottom income quintile, compared with 47 percent of those without a college degree. Moreover, 53 percent of the adults who completed a four-year degree moved from the bottom income quintile to the middle quintile or higher. Only 27 percent of those without a college degree moved to the middle income quintile or higher.

ADULT INCOME LEVELS OF THOSE BORN INTO THE BOTTOM U.S. INCOME QUINTILE (THE LOWEST FIFTH OF U.S. HOUSEHOLD INCOMES)



Source: The Pew Charitable Trusts, *Pursuing the American Dream: Economic Mobility Across Generations* (The Pew Charitable Trusts, 2012), http://www.pewtrusts.org/-/media/legacy/uploadedfiles/pca_assets/2012/PursuingAmericanDreampdf.pdf.

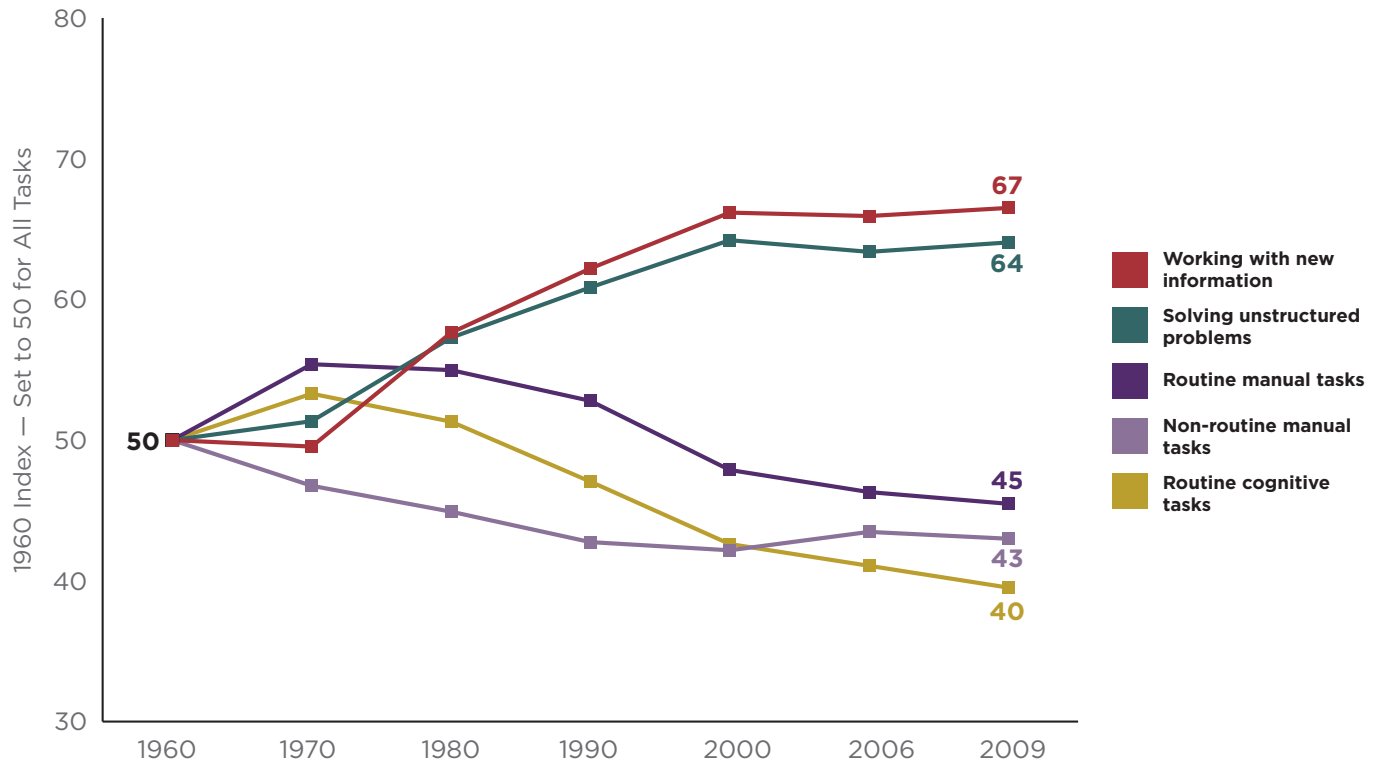
**America's Future Depends
on Closing Attainment and
Achievement Gaps**

A decorative wavy line separates the red upper section from the purple lower section. It consists of a white outer curve and a gold inner curve.

Wanted: Problem Solvers and Innovators

Demands in the U.S. workplace are changing. High-paying, low-skill jobs are disappearing as routine work is outsourced overseas or done by computers. Today, jobs that support families require employees who can “look at problems in unorthodox ways, seeing different angles and finding workable solutions.”⁶ These are skills developed through a high-quality liberal education. Colleges that are leading for equity must make sure *all* students master them.

Growth in jobs that require adaptive skills and learning



Source: David H. Autor and Brendan Price, *The Changing Task Composition of the US Labor Market: An Update of Autor, Levy, and Murnane (2003)* (Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2013).

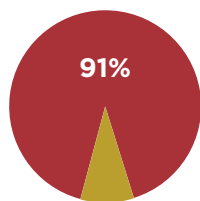
Wanted: Critical Thinkers and Communicators

In surveys about hiring and promotion priorities, employers underscore the importance of developing skills aligned with today's innovation economy. They assess the quality of a college degree by how effectively the graduate can understand and act on new ideas, communicate information clearly, use evidence, and lead effectively in a fast-changing environment.

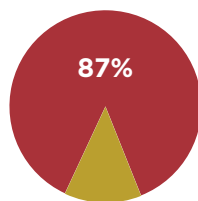
More than nine in ten employers (91 percent) say they value critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills more than a potential employee's undergraduate major. Nearly all employers (96 percent) agree that all college students should have experiences that teach them how to solve problems with people whose views are different from their own. And 87 percent of employers say they give hiring preference to college graduates who have completed a senior project.

These skills—which are central to a twenty-first-century liberal education—also have value beyond their currency in the knowledge economy. These same skills prepare graduates to live responsibly in an increasingly diverse democracy and in an interconnected global community.

Skills employers value most



Percentage of employers who say that critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving abilities are more important than a potential employee's undergraduate major



Percentage of employers who say they give hiring preference to college graduates who have completed a senior project

Source: Hart Research Associates, *Falling Short? College Learning and Career Success* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015), <https://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research/2015-survey-results>.

“The premium on lifelong learning just keeps going up. . . . Students have to have knowledge and know how to use it—know *and do*.”

— David Rattray
Senior Director, Education & Workforce Development
Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce

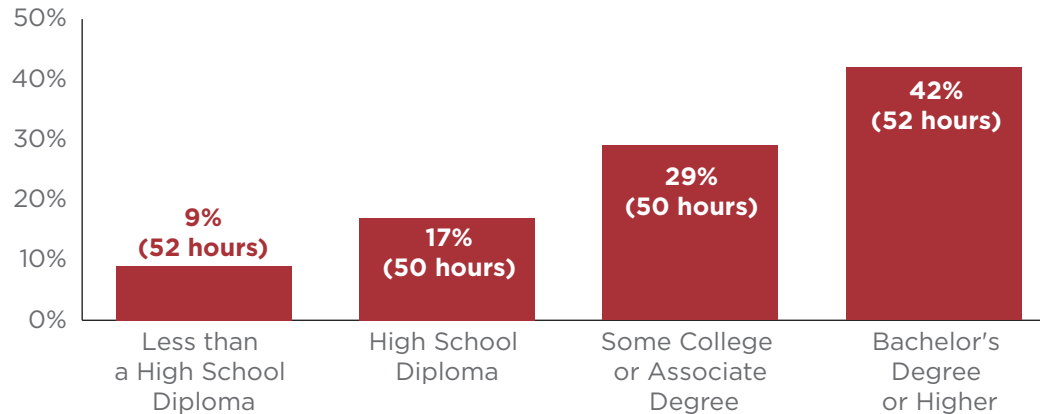
College Pays Powerful Economic and Social Benefits

In 2011, median earnings of full-time workers with bachelor's degrees (and no advanced degrees) were \$21,000 higher than those of high school graduates. And the benefits of education extend beyond the individuals who hold degrees.

One study looked at the impact of increasing the four-year college attainment rate in the fifty-one largest U.S. metropolitan areas. A one-percentage-point increase in the four-year college attainment rate is associated with an \$856 increase in per capita income for each of the fifty-one metropolitan areas—a total increase of \$143 billion for the nation.⁷ Degree holders also contribute more to the tax base and have greater civic participation, including greater participation in voting and more volunteerism.⁸

Volunteerism increases with education

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS AGED TWENTY-FIVE AND OLDER WHO VOLUNTEERED AND MEDIAN NUMBER OF HOURS VOLUNTEERED IN THE YEAR ENDING SEPTEMBER 2012



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Volunteering in the United States — 2012." As presented in Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York: The College Board, 2013).

"The heart of a vibrant democracy is educated, engaged citizens who are able to make choices for themselves, their families, their communities, and their country. In this respect, the success of American postsecondary education is critical to the success of American democracy."

— Charles Kolb
Former President
Committee for Economic Development

**Access to Quality Learning
Is Inequitable at All Levels**

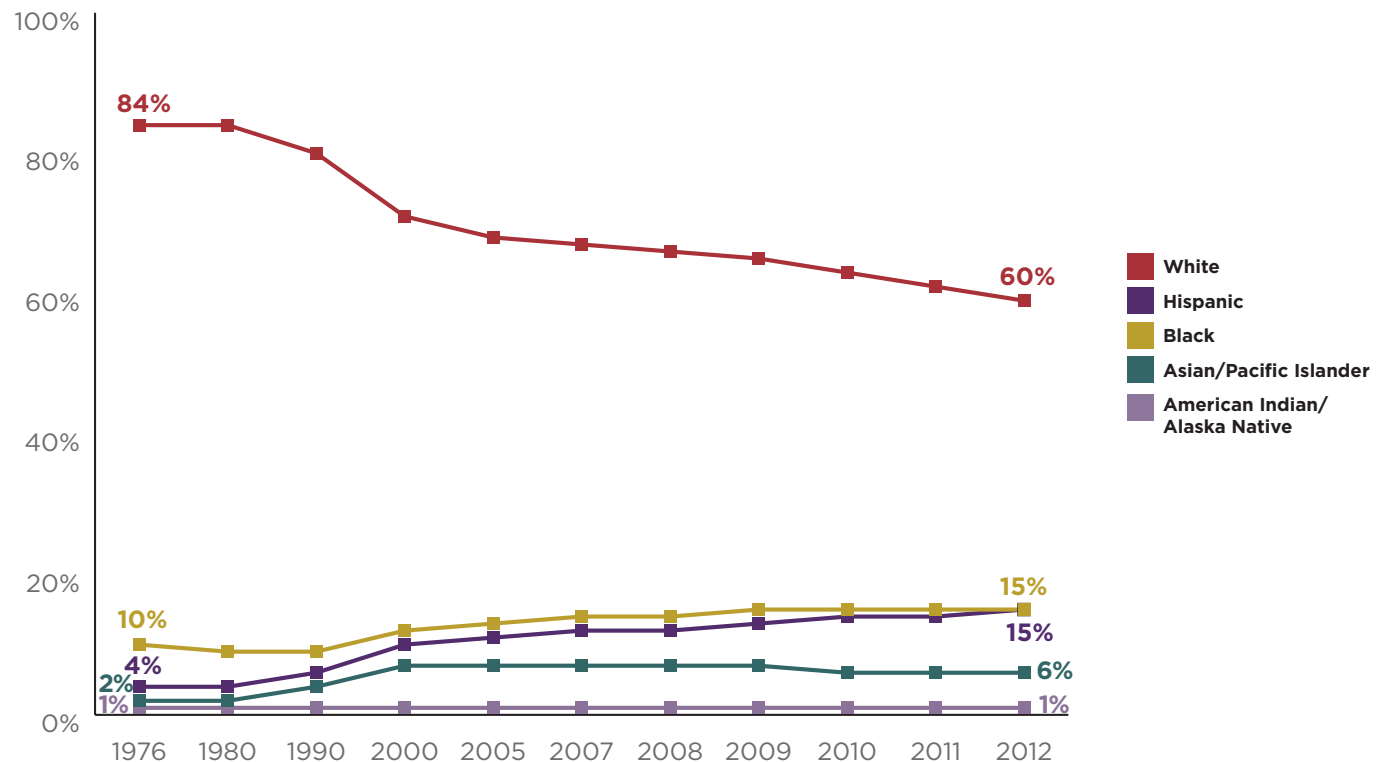
A decorative wavy line separates the red upper section from the purple lower section. It consists of a white line with a gold shadow effect, curving across the width of the page.

The Face of Higher Education Is Changing

Quality learning, from PK–12 through college, is the key to closing achievement gaps. Learning begins with enrollment. While white students still represent the majority of those enrolled in college, there has been a steady rise in college enrollment for students of color. And Latino students slightly outpace white students in one piece of recent enrollment data (not shown): the immediate college-going rate, or the percentage of students who attend college within one year of high school completion. In 2012, the immediate college-going rate of Latino high school graduates was 69 percent, compared to 67 percent for white graduates, 62 percent for African American graduates, and 84 percent for Asian graduates.⁹

College enrollment trends

PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL FALL ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE



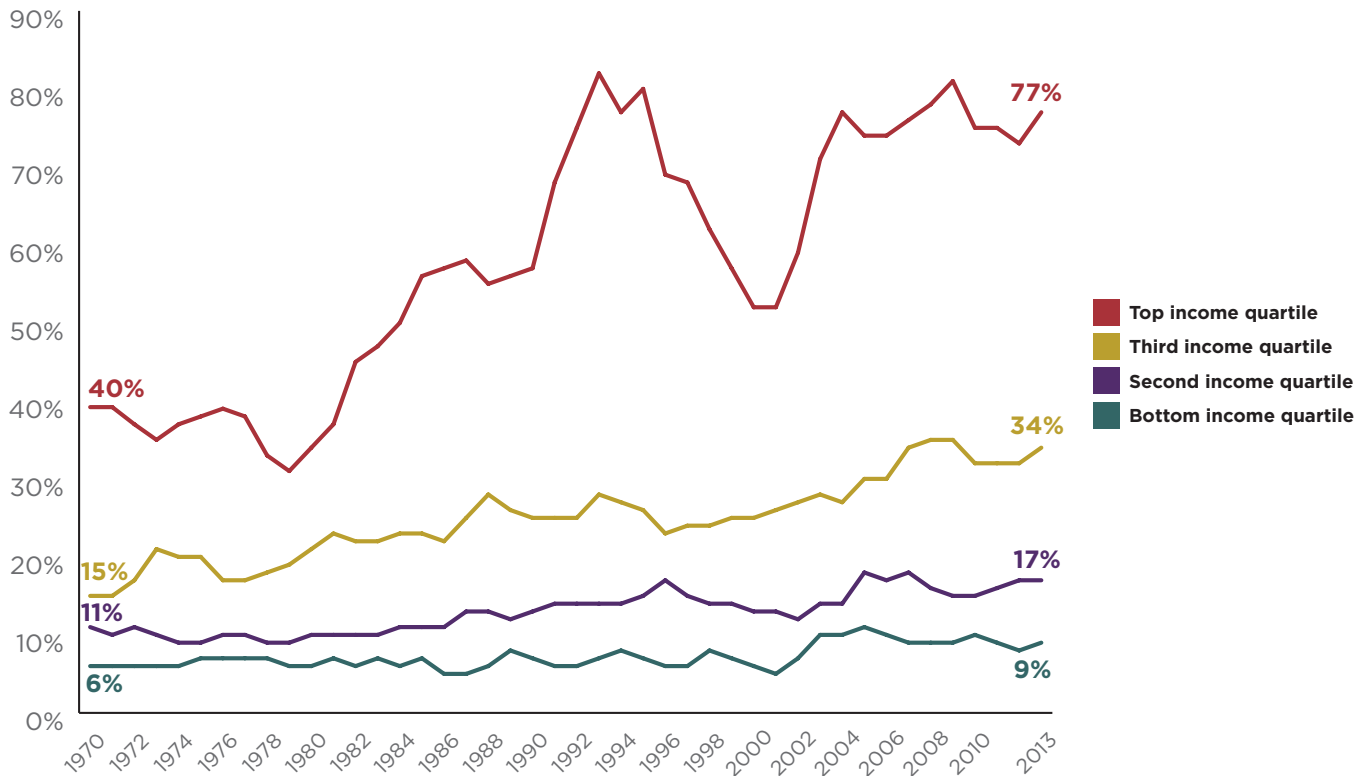
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: 2013," Table 306.10, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d13/tables/dt13_306.10.asp.

Too Few Low-Income Students Complete College

While postsecondary institutions are becoming more diverse, the degree attainment gap for low-income individuals is widening. In 2013, individuals from high-income families were eight times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree by age twenty-four than were those from low-income families. In 1970, the high-income individuals were more than six times more likely to earn a bachelor's degree.¹⁰ In the intervening 43 years, bachelor degree attainment among those from wealthy families nearly doubled while it barely moved for those in the poorest families.

Higher-income students are more likely to earn degrees

BACHELOR'S DEGREE ATTAINMENT BY AGE TWENTY-FOUR FOR DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS BY FAMILY INCOME QUARTILE



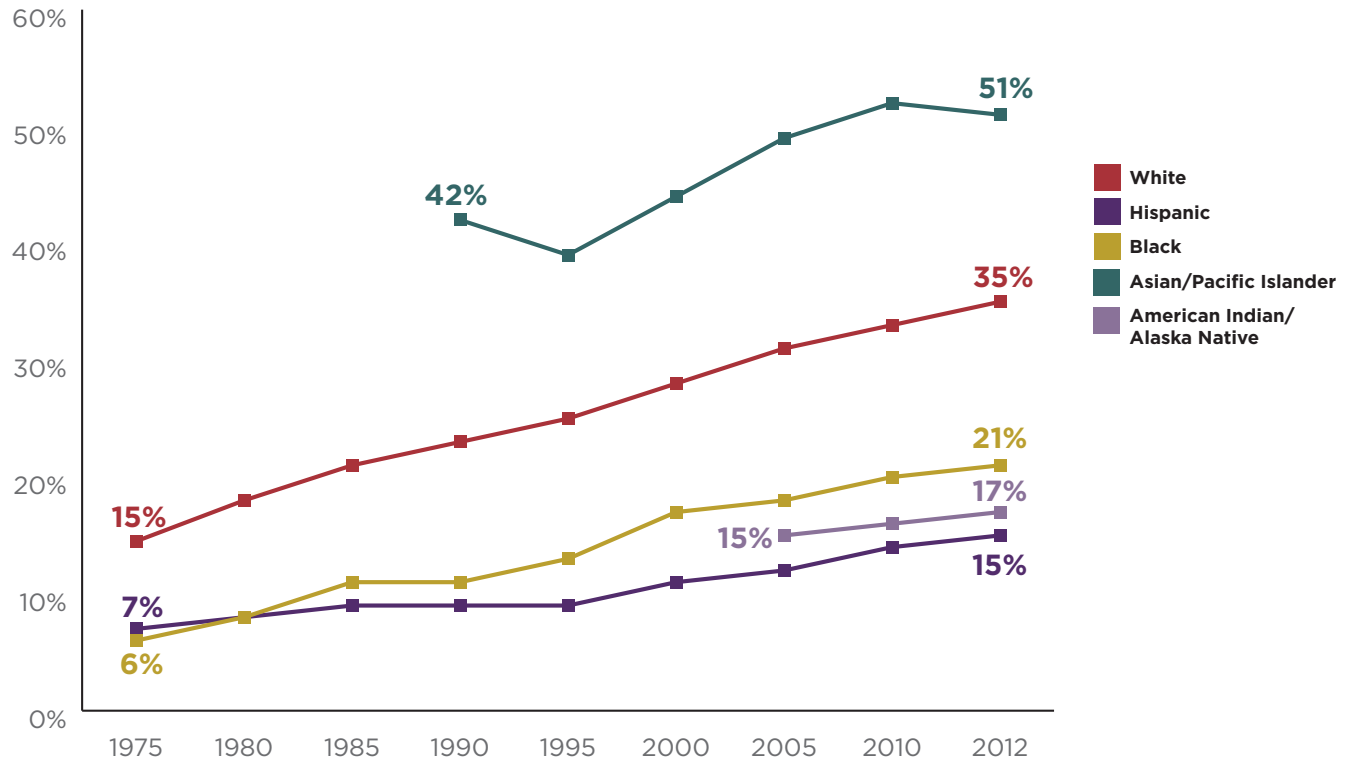
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey Data on School Enrollment," (unpublished data, 2013). As presented in Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education and PennAHEAD, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States* (2015), http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf.

Too Few Students of Color Complete College

In addition, there continues to be a degree attainment gap for students of color. An increasing percentage of all groups hold bachelor's degrees, but a consistently higher percentage of white adults holds degrees, as compared to African American and Latino adults.

Degree attainment levels

PERCENTAGE OF PERSONS AGED TWENTY-FIVE AND OVER WITH A BACHELOR'S OR HIGHER DEGREE, BY RACE/ETHNICITY



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Digest of Education Statistics: 2012," Table 8, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d12/tables/dt12_008.asp?referrer=report.

Note: Data are not available until 1989 for Asian/Pacific Islanders and until 2003 for American Indian/Alaska Natives.

Inequities in College Readiness

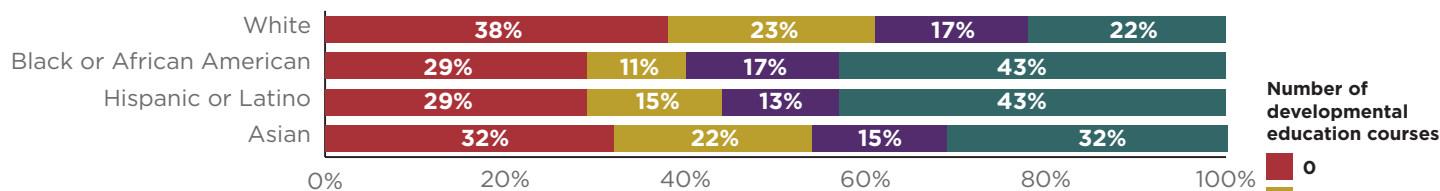
College readiness is a critical factor in degree attainment. And among students who enroll in college, there are dramatic differences in college readiness. This underpreparation grows out of gaps in educational opportunity, often beginning in pre-K and growing over time. Because each educational achievement leads to new educational opportunity, academic achievement becomes highly stratified.

For example, 56 percent of white eighth graders are below grade-level proficiency in math, compared to 79 percent of Latinos, 79 percent of American Indians, and 86 percent of African Americans.¹¹ In high school, 12 percent of white students participate in Advanced Placement (AP) courses, compared with 6 percent of African American and 9 percent of Latino students. The AP divide by income is even greater: 6 percent of low-income students participate in AP courses, compared with 16 percent of students who are not considered low income.

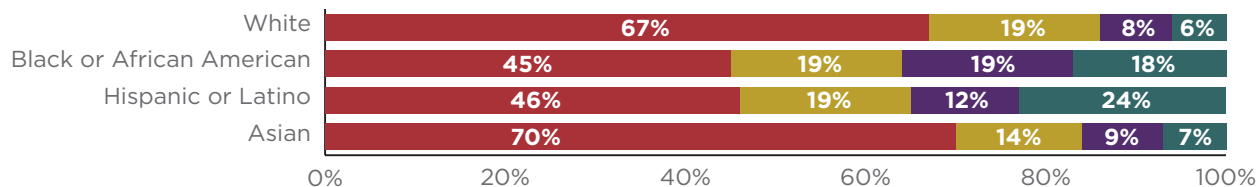
This unacceptable trend continues at the college level, where students of color are overrepresented in developmental education courses. Time spent in developmental education courses, which do not earn credit, delays students' entry into college-level courses and depletes their financial aid. As a result, completing college becomes more expensive and more uncertain.

Students of color are more likely to take developmental education courses

TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



Source: Data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study," 2009 data, <http://nces.ed.gov/datalab/quickstats>. Using calculations presented in Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise*.

Note: Percentages may not total 100% due to rounding.

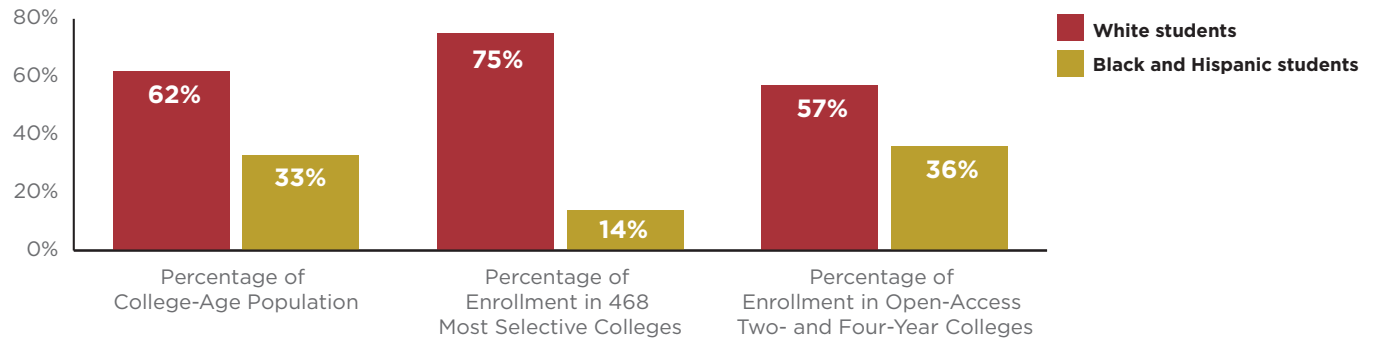
Inequities in Access to Resource-Rich Institutions

Low-income students and students of color disproportionately attend community colleges and less-selective four-year institutions. And while broad-access institutions have been charged with helping more students graduate, they typically have seen decreases in public funds for their work.

White students are most likely to enroll in selective colleges; students of color are most likely to enroll in open-access colleges

White individuals represent 62 percent of the college-age population (eighteen to twenty-four years old). They represent 75 percent of students at the 468 most selective four-year colleges and only 57 percent of students at the open-access two- and four-year colleges.

By contrast, black and Hispanic individuals represent 33 percent of the college-age population (eighteen to twenty-four years old). They represent only 14 percent of students at the 468 most selective four-year colleges and 36 percent of students at the open-access two- and four-year colleges.

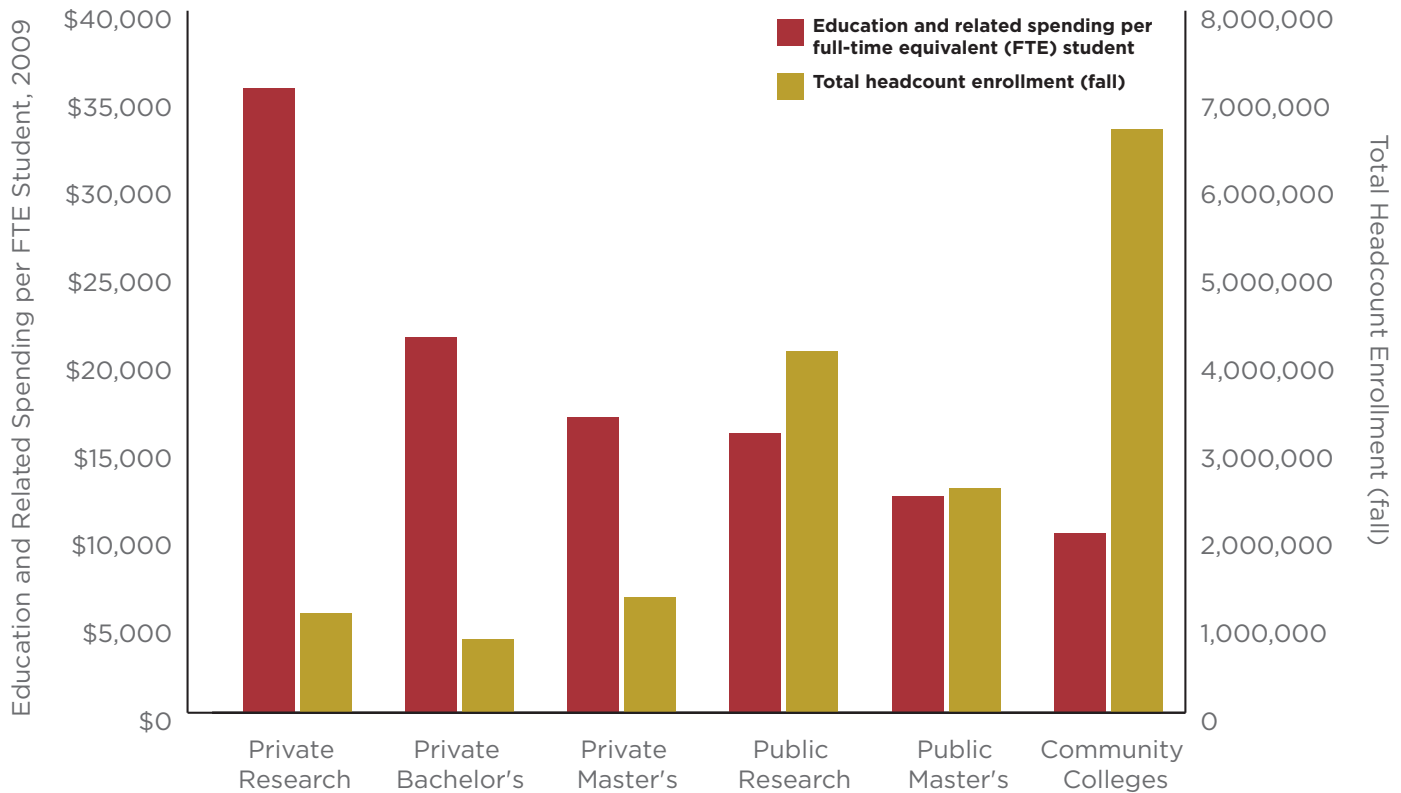


Source: Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

Inequities in Spending per Student

In effect, the community colleges and less-selective four-year institutions where low-income students and students of color are most likely to enroll have been charged with repairing the inequities that pervade the entire U.S. education system. But these institutions typically have fewer resources, more students, and markedly lower spending per student than the resource-richer institutions where most white students enroll.

Spending per student by institutional type

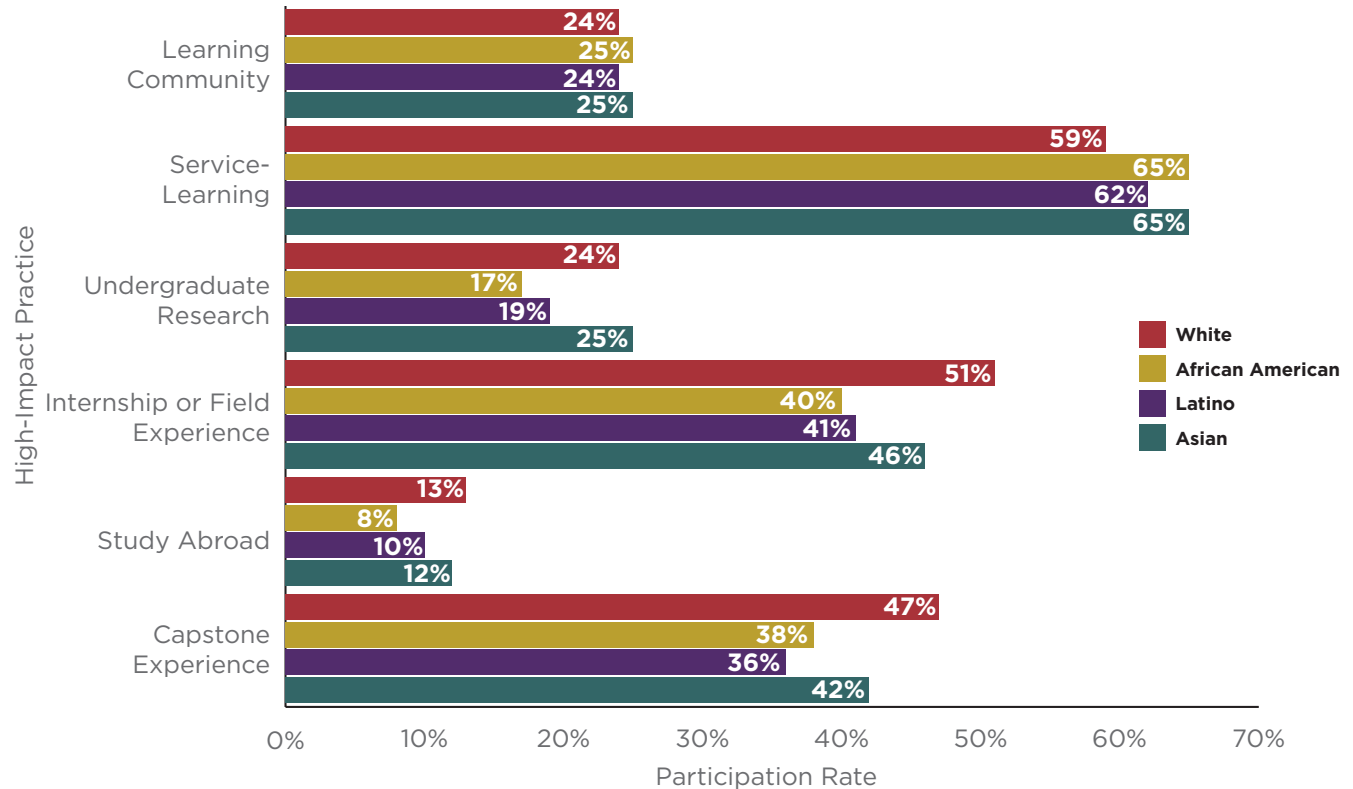


Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "IPEDS Analytics: Delta Cost Project Database," 1987-2009, spending data from the 11-year matched set, enrollment data from the unmatched set. As presented in J. Wellman, *Funding Strategies to Support Student Success: The Role of the State*, (Massachusetts: Jobs for the Future, 2013).

Inequities in Educational Opportunities in College

Students of color are underrepresented in many of the high-impact practices that are central to a high-quality liberal education. These practices teach students to synthesize information, apply knowledge, and develop problem-solving skills—all attributes that are in high demand by employers. And some of these experiences, “such as undergraduate research and internships[,] may constitute critical gateways into graduate education or high-demand and high-wage jobs.”¹²

Students of color experience fewer high-impact practices

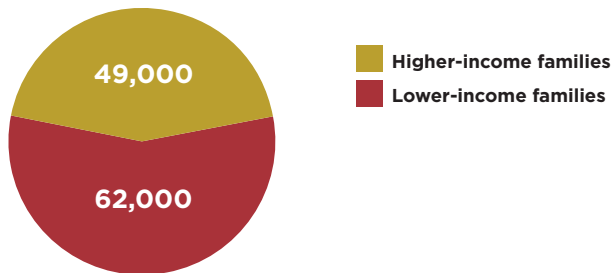


Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, “NSSE 2013 High-Impact Practices: US Grand Percentages by Student Characteristics,” (2013), http://nsse.iub.edu/2013_institutional_report/pdf/HIPTables/HIP.pdf. As presented in Witham et al., *America’s Unmet Promise*.

Income Disparity Does Not Account for Racial and Ethnic Gaps

Even after adjusting for income, we see persistent, unacceptable gaps in educational achievement. National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 1988/2000) data show 111,000 African Americans and Hispanics who scored in the top half of the SAT/ACT (high-scoring students) but did not graduate from college; 49,000 of them came from the top half of the family income distribution.¹³

Among high-scoring students of color who did not complete college, four in ten were from higher-income families



Source: Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce calculations using data from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Education Longitudinal Study (1988/2000). As presented in Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

“The postsecondary system is more and more complicit as a passive agent in the systematic reproduction of white racial privilege across generations.”

— Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl

**It Is Time to Act:
What College Leaders
and Faculty Can Do**

A decorative wavy line separates the red upper section from the purple lower section. It consists of a white line with a gold shadow, curving across the width of the page.

It Is Time to Act

Every college and university must focus with new intensity on supporting higher persistence and higher learning for students from underserved communities. This critical work begins with examining the institution's history and data. Then with this context in mind, institutions should ensure that they have a framework of inclusive excellence—one in which underserved students are experiencing the high-impact practices and engaging in the inquiry-based learning that is essential in any high-quality liberal education.

In the newest phase of its influential Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U has issued the LEAP Challenge: Every college and university should make excellence inclusive and ensure that every student prepares for and completes Signature Work. Through Signature Work, students demonstrate their achievement of twenty-first-century learning outcomes.

As part of this effort, colleges should gather representatives from across their institutions—students, faculty, staff,

administrators, and trustees—and engage them in self-study and planning about equity, inclusion, and excellence. The ten items below are designed to help guide such discussions and identify necessary action steps. They provide action steps that emerged from AAC&U's longstanding work on inclusive excellence and the LEAP Challenge. They are informed by *America's Unmet Promise*, AAC&U's General Education Maps and Markers project (GEMs), and the GEMs Equity Working Group. For more detail, visit www.aacu.org/gems.

Key Terms

Students who are **traditionally underrepresented in higher education**, primarily African American and Latino students, will soon be America's new majority of students. **Underserved students** are students who are not experiencing a high-quality education. Any student can be underserved, including students from groups that are traditionally underrepresented in higher education. And any student can be well served, particularly in institutions with a strong focus on equity.

In **Signature Work**, a student uses his or her cumulative learning to pursue a significant project related to a problem he or she defines. In work conducted throughout at least one semester, and with faculty guidance, the student produces work that expresses new insights and learning. **Students' completion of Signature Work provides evidence that they are ready to tackle complex problems in the workplace and in society.**

Does Your Institution Do the Following?

1. Know who your students are and will be.

- Study your institutional history and disaggregate data on student access and success.
- Assess your track record in educating students from underserved communities.
- Build PK–12 partnerships to strengthen underserved students' preparation and encourage enrollment in college.
- Make equity-mindedness an explicit goal across the institution's reform efforts.

2. Have frank, hard dialogues about the climate for underserved students with a goal of effecting a paradigm shift in language and actions.

- Engage the campus with evidence about how your institution is achieving its equity goals.
- Examine attitudes about underserved student success that may hinder or advance your institution's ability to support these students.
- Ensure that underserved students get whatever help is needed in ways that support, rather than marginalize.

3. Invest in culturally competent practices that lead to success of underserved students—and of all students.

- Be aware of who is already leading—or struggling to be heard—on equity and inclusion issues—and who else needs to be included.
- Braid your equity programs into ongoing orientation for all faculty and staff. Include contingent faculty as well as tenure-track faculty.
- Commit to a program of systematic and equity-minded leadership development for curricular and cocurricular change to better support student success.

4. Set and monitor equity-minded goals—and allocate aligned resources to achieve them.

- Define success in terms of access to inclusive excellence.
- Hold your institution accountable for progress on four levels: outreach and access, completion/transfer, engaged and high-impact learning, and demonstrated achievement of stated learning outcomes.

5. Develop and actively pursue a clear vision and goals for achieving the high-quality learning necessary for careers and citizenship, and therefore essential for a bachelor's degree.

- Develop a framework of associate and/or baccalaureate goals that set clear standards for students' development of the following Essential Learning Outcomes:
 - broad and integrative knowledge of histories, cultures, science, and society
 - well-honed intellectual and adaptive skills
 - in-depth engagement with unscripted problems relevant to both work and civic participation
 - Signature Work, which can include a student's research, practicum, community service, internships, or other project-based learning
- Ensure that all students are working each term on inquiry, analysis, projects, presentations, and other forms of active, collaborative learning.

6. Expect and prepare all students to produce culminating or Signature Work at the associate (or sophomore) and baccalaureate levels to show their achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes, and monitor data to ensure equitable participation and achievement among underserved students.

- Begin at entry to help students engage in problem-centered inquiry and identify problems or questions of special interest.
- Provide at least one experience of cross-disciplinary inquiry work at the associate or sophomore level and additional experiences for juniors and seniors.
- Scale up the number of academic programs that support Signature Work.

7. Provide support to help students develop guided plans to achieve Essential Learning Outcomes, prepare for and complete Signature Work, and connect college with careers.

- Faculty and staff advisors should help students plan a course of study keyed to students' goals, attentive to students' life contexts, and designed to help them achieve the Essential Learning Outcomes.
- Using equity-minded data analytics, track students' progress and provide proactive guidance and, as needed, mentoring or academic assistance.

8. Identify high-impact practices (HIPs) best suited to your institution's students and its quality framework of Essential Learning Outcomes, and work proactively to ensure equitable student participation in HIPs.

- Collect and disaggregate data on who is participating in selected HIPs.
- Work systemically to redress inequities in students' experiences of high-impact and empowering learning.

9. Ensure that Essential Learning Outcomes are addressed and high-impact practices are incorporated across all programs, including general education, the majors, digital learning platforms, and cocurricular/community-based programs.

- Redesign general education to directly address equity goals and to involve students in active learning from their first through final year of college.
- Review and amend major programs to ensure students' achievement of Essential Learning Outcomes in ways appropriate to students' fields of study.
- Provide professional development opportunities that help faculty and staff design and implement quality high-impact practices.

10. Make student achievement—including underserved student achievement—visible and valued.

- Assess students' achievement of expected Essential Learning Outcomes and report regularly to faculty, staff, trustees, and other stakeholders. Disaggregate data on students' progress toward completion/transfer and demonstrated achievement of expected Essential Learning Outcomes.
- Develop capacity to tell the story of what an empowering education looks like in the twenty-first century and why it matters for underserved students.
- Develop/expand partnerships with nonprofit organizations and employers to reinforce the college's commitment to making excellence inclusive.

Endnotes

1. Keith Witham, Lindsey E. Malcom-Piqueux, Alicia C. Dowd, and Estela Mara Bensimon, *America's Unmet Promise: The Imperative for Equity in Higher Education* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2015).
2. Sheryll Cashin, "Justice for Blacks and Whites," *New York Times*, July 1, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/02/opinion/lessons-from-the-civil-rights-act-50-years-later.html?_r=2.
3. Adapted from Estela Mara Bensimon, "The Underestimated Significance of Practitioner Knowledge in the Scholarship of Student Success," *Review of Higher Education* 30, no. 4 (2007): 441–469.
4. Adapted from Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise*.
5. Keith Lawrence, Stacey Sutton, Anne Kubisch, Gretchen Susi, and Karen Fulbright-Anderson, *Structural Racism and Community Building*, Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change (Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute, 2004).
6. David Tuffley, "In 10 Years, Your Job Might Not Exist. Here's How to Make Sure You're Still Employable," *Washington Post*, January 5, 2015, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2015/01/05/in-10-years-the-job-market-will-look-totally-different-heres-how-to-make-sure-youre-ready>.
7. CEOs for Cities, *City Dividends* (2008), <http://www.ceosforcities.org/city-dividends>.
8. Sandy Baum, Jennifer Ma, and Kathleen Payea, *Education Pays 2013: The Benefits of Higher Education for Individuals and Society* (New York: The College Board, 2013).
9. Grace Kena, Susan Aud, Frank Johnson, Xiaolei Wang, Jijun Zhang, Amy Rathbun, Sidney Wilkinson-Flicker, and Paul Kristapovich, *The Condition of Education 2014* (NCES 2014-083) (Washington, DC: US Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). As presented in Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise*.
10. U.S. Census Bureau, "Current Population Survey Data on School Enrollment," (unpublished data, 2013). As presented in Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education and PennAHEAD, *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States* (2015), http://www.pellinstitute.org/downloads/publications-Indicators_of_Higher_Education_Equity_in_the_US_45_Year_Trend_Report.pdf.
11. The Annie E. Casey Foundation, *The 2014 KIDS COUNT Data Book* (2013), 21, <http://www.aecf.org/ml/resourcedoc/aecf-2014kidscountdatabook-2014.pdf>
12. Witham et al., *America's Unmet Promise*.
13. Anthony P. Carnevale and Jeff Strohl, *Separate and Unequal: How Higher Education Reinforces the Intergenerational Reproduction of White Racial Privilege* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University, 2013), https://cew.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/SeparateUnequal.ES_.pdf.

Additional Resources on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence

America’s Unmet Promise: The Imperative for Equity in Higher Education (2015)

By Keith Witham, Lindsey E. Malcom-Piqueux, Alicia C. Dowd, and Estela Mara Bensimon

This publication makes the case for the urgent need to expand access to and success in high-quality educational programs for students traditionally underserved in higher education. Addressing students’ access and success in terms of college completion as well as indicators of educational opportunity such as participation in high-impact practices, the authors present an equity-minded guiding framework that can be used throughout higher education. This is an excellent resource for launching conversations about diversity, equity, and institutional change.

Committing to Equity and Inclusive Excellence: A Campus Guide for Self-Study and Planning (2015)

This publication provides a framework for needed dialogue, assessment, and action to address inequities in higher education institutions. Focusing on issues of access and success, it can be used as a tool for bringing together campus leaders and practitioners—across divisions and departments—to engage in internal assessment and chart a path forward to improve all students’ success and achievement of key learning outcomes. The Guide is designed with a particular focus on the success of students who come from groups traditionally underserved in higher education.

Institutions working on a framework for inclusive excellence should also consult the Degree Qualifications Profile, Lumina Foundation, 2014.

The LEAP Challenge: Education for a World of Unscripted Problems (2015)

The LEAP Challenge builds on a decade of LEAP reform efforts on campus to advance Essential Learning Outcomes and high-impact educational practices for all students. The LEAP Challenge calls on colleges and universities to engage students in Signature Work that will prepare them to integrate and apply their learning to a significant project.

The Drama of Diversity and Democracy: Higher Education and American Commitments—2nd Ed. (2011)

This publication, originally published in 1995, addresses foundational questions about the role educators can and must play in building civic capacities—knowledge, skills, commitments, collaborations—for our diverse and globally connected democracy. This new edition features a foreword by Ramón A. Gutiérrez and a preface by AAC&U President Carol Geary Schneider.

AAC&U Centennial LEAP Video (2015)

AAC&U’s 2015 Centennial LEAP Video features the power of an engaged, public-spirited liberal education to transform students’ lives and address the “big questions.” It is perfect for stakeholders who need a better understanding of what a twenty-first-century liberal education really can do for today’s students. Watch the video at www.aacu.org/centennial/video.

For these and other resources, see www.aacu.org/diversity/publications.

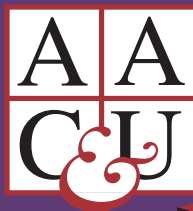
This publication was funded in part with support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The perspectives contained above are those of AAC&U and do not necessarily reflect positions or policies of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.



AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,300 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges, community colleges, research universities, and comprehensive universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education and inclusive excellence at both the national and local levels, and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.



SINCE 1915

Association of American
Colleges and Universities

1818 R St. NW
Washington, DC 20009

www.aacu.org | info@aacu.org