

Data Sources: Aspirations to Graduate School

The U.S. Census Bureau recently reported that only 10% of U.S. residents currently hold master's or doctoral degrees. Among racial/ethnic minorities, the shares with advanced degrees are even lower. Fewer than 5% of African Americans and 3% of Latinos are master's or doctoral recipients (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). There are a number of factors that explain the lower level of graduate degree attainment among persons of color. One of the key reasons is that, according to recent survey data from the National Center for Education Statistics, minorities are less likely to aspire to attend graduate school, are less likely to complete high school, and are less likely to attend four-year colleges immediately after finishing high school.

In 2002, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) launched the *Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002* (ELS:2002). ELS:2002 is designed to monitor the high school experiences and transitions of a nationally representative sample of tenth graders. ELS:2002 obtains information via interviews of the high school students, their teachers and other school personnel, and parents. The survey project also collects data from the students' high school transcripts and other databases that track their progress from high school to postsecondary education and/or the workforce. Information on the students was first collected in 2002, and then follow-up surveys and data were collected in 2004 and 2006 (NCES, 2007a and 2007b). Information from the 2006 surveys, recently released by NCES (2007b), allow for an examination of students' aspirations for higher education and activities during and after high school that led them onto the path toward future undergraduate and graduate study.

ELS:2002 data show that gaps in aspirations for graduate school by race/ethnicity show up early in students' high school careers. As Table 1

demonstrates, in 2002 less than one-third of Latino high school sophomores said they aspired to achieve a graduate or professional school degree at some point in their futures, compared with 36% of African Americans, 41% of White non-Hispanics, and 50% of Asian/Pacific Islanders. Prior studies have shown that parents often serve as educational role models for their children (Horn, Cataldi, and Sikora, 2005). So one possible reason Latinos and African Americans were less likely than other groups to aspire to graduate education was that they were less likely to have a parent with a graduate degree. About 14% of White non-Hispanic sophomores and 20% of Asians had a father with a graduate or professional degree. Just 8% of African Americans and 5% of Latinos had fathers with these degrees.

Unfortunately, African American and Latino high school

Table 1. Educational Aspirations of 2002 High School Sophomores, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	Less than Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Master's Degree or Higher	Pct. Of High School Sophomores With A Father Who Holds an Advanced Degree*
Total (All Students)	21%	40%	40%	12%
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian/Pacific Islander	13%	37%	50%	20%
African American	23%	41%	36%	8%
Latino	27%	40%	32%	5%
White, non-Hispanic	19%	40%	41%	14%
Other	20%	38%	42%	12%

*Includes a master's, doctoral, or first professional degree.

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002/2006 Educational Longitudinal Survey, 2007.
Due to rounding, details may not total to 100%.

sophomores were also less likely to have completed high school. Just 86% of Latino 2002 sophomores and 89% of African Americans had received a high school diploma or general educational development (GED) certificate by 2006 (see Table 2). Or, put another way, roughly 14% of Latinos and 11% of African Americans were either still enrolled in high school or GED programs in 2006, or left education entirely without a diploma or GED. In contrast, only 5% of White and 4% of Asian 2002 high school sophomores had not completed high school or received a GED by 2006. In addition, White non-Hispanic and Asian/Pacific Islander high school graduates were much more likely to have applied to one or more postsecondary institution, and to have enrolled in college by 2006. Just 67% of Latino high school graduates and 70% of African Americans were enrolled in higher education in 2006, versus 79% of White non-Hispanics and 87% of Asian/Pacific Islanders.

These data suggest that underrepresented minority high school students are substantially less likely to be on the path toward undergraduate study and eventual eligibility to participate in post-baccalaureate studies.

Research has shown that high school students who enroll at

Table 2. Educational Experiences of 2002 High School Sophomores as of 2006, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	Pct. Who Graduated from High School	Pct. Of High School Grads Who Applied to College	Pct. Of High School Grads Who Enrolled in College
Total (All Students)	92%	82%	75%
Race/Ethnicity			
Asian/Pacific Islander	96%	91%	87%
African American	89%	82%	70%
Latino	86%	77%	67%
White, non-Hispanic	95%	83%	79%
Other	90%	80%	67%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002/2006 Educational Longitudinal Survey, 2007.

four-year colleges and universities in the fall immediately following their receipt of a high school diploma are more likely to obtain baccalaureates within six years (Horn, Cataldi, and Sikora, 2005). By that measure, the underrepresented minorities who do enroll in higher education after high school are less likely than other groups to be on the path toward early baccalaureate completion, a key determinate of future graduate school enrollment and success. As Table 3 illustrates, more than half of the Latino high school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary institutions by 2006 were attending two-year public colleges (community colleges). Just 36% were enrolled at four-year public and private institutions. On the other hand, 64% of Asian/Pacific Islanders and 61% of White non-Hispanics had entered four-year public and private non-profit schools.

Table 3. Types of Higher Education Institutions Attended by 2002 High School Sophomores Who Entered College as of 2006, by Gender and Race/Ethnicity

	Four-Year Public or Private Non-Profit College or University	Two-Year Public College (Community College)	Public or Private Non-Profit Trade or Technical School	Proprietary (Private for Profit) School
Total (All Students)	56%	36%	2%	6%
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian/Pacific Islander	64%	31%	1%	3%
African American	51%	38%	2%	9%
Latino	36%	51%	2%	11%
White non-Hispanic	61%	34%	1%	4%
Other	56%	34%	3%	6%

Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2002/2006 Educational Longitudinal Survey, 2007.

The lower incidence of high school students from racial/ethnic minority groups who aspire to graduate degrees and start on the path toward post-baccalaureate success could not come at a more precarious time in our nation's history. Projections of future labor force trends developed by the Bureau of Labor Statistics show that by the year 2014, more than one-third of the new employment opportunities could be available to highly educated workers, particularly those with training in engineering, computer science, and physical science (Hecker, 2005; Toossi, 2005). Meanwhile, Census Bureau data show that the combined population of Latino and African American residents will rise 36% between 2004 and 2020 while the White non-Hispanic population will increase just 4% (Redd, 2006). Thus, increasing the number of Latinos and African Americans with graduate degrees is a crucial element for meeting future workforce needs.

If America is to remain competitive with its major international trading partners and strengthen its social and intellectual capital, graduate school aspirations and success of all our high school students—particularly racial/ethnic minorities—must be increased. CGS will continue to monitor these trends and will look for advice from graduate deans and others in the community to think of ways to increase

graduate school aspirations for high school and college students from all racial/ethnic backgrounds.

By Kenneth E. Redd, Director, Research and Policy Analysis

References

Hecker, D.E. 2005. "Occupational Employment Projections to 2014." *Monthly Labor Review*, 128, 11: 70-101.

Horn, L., Cataldi, E.F., and Sikora, A. 2005. *Waiting to Attend College: Undergraduates Who Delay Their Postsecondary Enrollment*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). 2007a. *Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:2002)*. On-line. Available: <http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/els2002/>.

National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). 2007b. 2002/2006 Educational Longitudinal Survey Data Analysis System Dataset.

Redd, K.E. 2006. "Future Shock! How Immigration and Demographic Trends Could Affect Financial Aid and College Enrollment." *Student Aid Transcript* 17, 2: 20-27.

Toosi, M. 2005. "Labor Force Projections to 2014: Retiring Boomers." *Monthly Labor Review*, 128, 11: 25-44.

U.S. Census Bureau. 2008. *Educational Attainment in the United States: 2007*. On-line. Available: <http://www.census.gov/population/socdemo/education/cps2007/Table1-01.xls>. Retrieved on April 11, 2008.

New Deans and Titles

Bertha D. Minus is Associate Provost at University of the District of Columbia. She replaces Willhelmina Reuben Cooke.

Patricia Calarco is Dean of the Graduate Division, University of California, San Francisco.

Abiodun Ojemakinde is Vice President for Academic Affairs at Albany State University.

Horacio Sosa is Interim Dean, Graduate School at Rowan University. He replaces S. Jay Kuder.

Feranda Williamson is Dean at Capella University. She replaces Valerie Perkins.

Julia Wrigley is Provost & Senior Vice President (Acting) at City University of New York. She replaces Linda Edwards.

Welcome New Members:

Regular Members
California Lutheran University
Fairmont State University
Lipscomb University

International Member
United Arab Emirates University