

College and Career Readiness: A Quick Stats Fact Sheet

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The transition from high school into college or the workforce is a key turning point in the lives of young people. Regardless of their chosen career or academic path after high school, young people must have the capacity to address complex problems in order to maximize their potential for professional and personal success. Far too many students—especially at-risk, special education, and minority students—are not receiving an education that adequately prepares them for life following high school.

The following statistics highlight some of the challenges and opportunities facing high school students after graduation.

College and Career Aspirations

- ◆ Ninety-three percent of middle school students report that their goal is to attend college. However, only 44% enroll in college, and only 26% graduate with a college diploma within six years of enrolling (Conley, 2012a; Conley, 2012b).
- ◆ Seventy-seven percent of students with disabilities set postsecondary education as their post-high school goal according to school staff (Wagner, Newman, Cameto, Garza, & Levine, 2005).
- ◆ High school seniors who set the postsecondary goal of earning a four-year degree are 28% more likely to apply to college than students with no aspirations to attend college. Students who aspire to complete an advanced degree are 34% more likely to apply to college than those who do not (Gilkey, Seburn, & Conley, 2011).

Preparation for College and Work

- ◆ There is a gap between students' aspirations to attend college and their preparedness for college-level work. As a result, many students who enroll in college do not graduate with a degree.

- From 1997 to 2010, the percentage of middle and high school students planning to attend college increased from 67% to 75% (MetLife, 2011).
- During that same time, the percentage of Americans ages 25 to 29 who attained a bachelor's degree increased only slightly from 28% to 32%. (Snyder & Dillow, 2011).
- ◆ There is a disparity between high school teachers' views of college readiness and student performance.
 - High school teachers estimate that 63% of their graduating seniors will be adequately prepared for college-level coursework without the need for remediation and that 51% will graduate from college (MetLife, 2011).
 - Data shows that only 25% of high school graduates who took the ACT test were ready for college-level work (ACT, 2012).
- ◆ There is growing consensus that students entering the workforce must demonstrate similarly high proficiency in academic knowledge and skills as those entering college (ACT, 2006; Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009; Educational Policy Improvement Center, 2009). Secondary (71%) and postsecondary (78%) teachers alike believe that the knowledge and skill sets necessary for college readiness and career readiness overlap significantly (ACT, 2009).
- ◆ Nearly half of all high school seniors believe they lack the full spectrum of skills and abilities needed to secure non-entry-level jobs. One fourth of seniors surveyed reported they did not feel at all prepared for college-level work (San Francisco Youth Empowerment Fund, 2011).

The Costs and Benefits of Attending College

- ◆ For the 2010–11 school year, the average annual cost of attending college, including undergraduate tuition, room, and board, was estimated at \$13,600 for public institutions and \$36,300 for private not-for-profit institutions. Since 2000, expenses at public institutions rose 42%, and expenses at private institutions rose 31% after adjustment for inflation (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).

- ◆ The outstanding balance for student loans is approximately \$870 billion, a figure far higher than the outstanding credit card balance (\$693 billion) or auto loan balance (\$730 billion). The average individual loan balance is \$23,300, and 14.4%, or approximately 5.4 million borrowers, had at least one past due account during the last quarter of 2011 (Brown, Haughwout, Lee, Mabutas, & Klaauw, 2012).
- ◆ These costs only increase for the number of students who are not adequately prepared:
 - Many new and underprepared college students must enroll in remedial coursework. Twenty percent of incoming freshmen at four-year institutions and 52% of those at two-year colleges need to enroll in some type of remedial coursework. African-American, Latino, and students from low-income families enroll at the highest percentages (Complete College America, 2012).
 - The estimated cost to states and students to provide remedial college courses to underprepared high school graduates is \$3 billion annually (Complete College America, 2012).
 - In community colleges, less than 25% of students who required remedial coursework earned a degree or certificate within eight years of enrollment. Forty percent of students who did not require remediation completed their degree or certificate within eight years (Bailey, 2009).
- ◆ However, completing a postsecondary degree has become more important than ever. Although 76% of young adults say that college has become harder to afford in the past five years and 73% believe that graduates have more student debt than they can manage, approximately 80% still believe that some type of postsecondary education or training is more important now than it was a generation ago (The Institute for College Access & Success, 2011).
- ◆ Research predicts that within the next 10 years, 63% of all jobs in the United States will require some postsecondary education and that 90% of new jobs in growing industries with high wages will require some postsecondary education (Carnevale, Smith, & Strohl, 2010).

- ◆ Economically, high employment rates and higher wages for workers translate into more taxable income and increased consumer spending. The unemployment rate for high school graduates is 9.4%. For those with a bachelor's degree, the unemployment rate is only 4.9%. Individuals with four-year degrees also earn more, with a median weekly earnings average 65% higher than those with only a high school diploma (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2012).

Implications for Underserved Populations

- ◆ The benefits of earning a postsecondary degree are clear, but minorities and persons with disabilities are disproportionately ill-prepared to enroll and succeed in higher education. While 70% of white high school graduates entered college immediately upon graduation in 2010, only 66% and 60% of African-American and Hispanic graduates, respectively, did the same (Aud et al., 2012).
- ◆ Underserved groups, such as minorities, students with low socioeconomic status, and those who are the first in their families to attend college, often require additional support to access the federal financial aid system (College Board, 2010).
- ◆ Fifteen percent of high school graduates with disabilities attended a four-year college after leaving high school as compared to 37% of young adults in the general population (Sanford, Newman, Wagner, Cameto, Knokey, & Shaver, 2011).
- ◆ Thirty-two percent of white high school graduates who took the ACT in 2012 met all four of its College Readiness Benchmarks, while only 5% of African-American students and 13% of Hispanic students met all four benchmarks (ACT, 2012).
- ◆ African-American students account for 14.6% of the public high school population and represent 8.6% of AP exam test takers; however, only 3.9% of "successful examinees" (defined as scoring a 3 or above on the AP exam) are African American (College Board, 2011).
- ◆ English language learners (ELLs) face some of the largest challenges in becoming prepared for college and careers. They often struggle to become proficient in English while trying to meet rigorous academic standards, and because they are frequently placed in mainstream

classes with no language support, long-term ELLs often become disengaged in school (Olsen, 2010). Overall, ELLs are twice as likely as their English proficient peers to drop out of high school in the last two years when they are preparing to make the transition to a postsecondary pathway. While only 5.8% of English proficient students drop out in the last two years of high school, 10.2% of ELLs drop out in this time period (Rumberger, 2006).

- ◆ Exposure to work experiences in high school has been linked to decreased dropout rates and smoother transitions into and greater success in the workforce (Sum & Gillis, 2012). However, in 2010, over twice as many white teens held summer jobs than African-American teens. Further, teens with higher annual family incomes are more likely to engage in summer employment opportunities (Sum, Khatiwada, & Palma, 2010)

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