

Getting to the Finish Line

College Enrollment and Graduation

A Seven Year Longitudinal Study of the Boston Public Schools Class of 2000



Prepared by:

Center for Labor Market Studies
Northeastern University
Andrew Sum, Director

Prepared for:

Boston Private Industry Council
and
Boston Public Schools

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Prepared by:

Andrew Sum

Neeta Fogg

Ishwar Khatiwada

Joseph McLaughlin

Sheila Palma

with

Jacqui Motroni

Paulo Tobar

Center for Labor Market Studies

Northeastern University

and

Neil Sullivan

Chris Smith

Boston Private Industry Council

Boston, Massachusetts

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

This report provides a detailed outline of the story of the Boston Public Schools (BPS) Class of 2000 as seen through the lens of college enrollment, graduation and continuing enrollment. This is a study of student experiences and tells us how many students from the BPS Class of 2000 enrolled in two and four year colleges over the seven years following high school graduation. It tells us the number of students who obtained postsecondary degrees from the schools in which they enrolled initially, as of the summer of 2007, and the number who received degrees from some other institution. This provides us with the percentage of BPS graduates entering college who have received formal degrees, as well as the number of those who were still enrolled without a degree in the spring of 2007. We sort this data by gender, race-ethnicity, type of college initially attended, and type of high school from which these students graduated.

As a study of college graduation seven years after high school graduation, regardless of when students initially enrolled, this report does not compare directly with the findings of the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data Systems (IPEDS) report, a federal report on three and six year graduation rates for two and four year colleges, respectively. We are able to generate six year graduation rates for subsets of students within the Class of 2000, but this is not the primary purpose of this study. We have detailed reports on the experiences of BPS graduates at specific colleges and universities, as well as reports sorted by the high schools from which they graduated, and we will share this data with these schools and colleges for their own analysis and benchmarking.

Boston has made significant progress on its postsecondary enrollment rate over the past 15 years, with an increase of over 10 percentage points in the share of new graduates attending college in the first year following high school graduation. Enrollment rates in two and four year colleges for the BPS Class of 2006 are almost three percentage points higher than the national average, suburbs included. However, with the majority of new jobs in the Boston metropolitan economy now requiring a college degree, it makes sense to ask the next question. "How many of those who enroll in college succeed in obtaining a degree?"

We have set up a reporting system that identifies how many BPS high school graduates achieve a college degree within seven years. This unique reporting system allows us to establish a baseline against which we can measure future performance. We would like to gather this data every year for this purpose. In addition, we have data for more recent BPS classes, and we will be able to generate reports on retention as well as graduation rates, allowing us to identify trends over several graduating classes.

It is important to consider Boston's numbers in the context of the nation as a whole. Not much public attention is given to the fact that fewer than half of those who enroll full-time in college in this country obtain a degree within six years. According to the longitudinal study most comparable to our report, the national six year graduation rate for first-time college students is 43.6%. The rates for types of colleges vary substantially. The six year graduation rate for two year public colleges is 26%, as compared to 57.4% for four year public and 69.6% for four year private institutions.

The Boston Private Industry Council, the Boston Higher Education Partnership and the Boston Public Schools initiated this project in the context of the Boston Compact, the city's historic education and workforce development agreement. After a few years of trying to obtain data from local institutions, the Center for Labor Market Studies and the Boston PIC identified the National Student Clearinghouse as the source of data that could tell us what we wanted to know about college enrollment, graduation and continuing enrollment for the vast majority of BPS graduates. In May of 2006, the Boston School Committee authorized the use of date of birth for student identification. This allowed us to link BPS data with the Clearinghouse database, as well as with the CLMS data that has been developed through the PIC's annual "year after" study of BPS graduates.

This project has a long history, and we would like to thank our supporters for their patience. The Boston Plan for Excellence in the Public Schools supported the work over several years, as the lead partner for the Schools for a New Society initiative of the Carnegie Corporation of New York. More recently, The Boston Foundation stepped forward with the funding necessary to finish this phase of the project. We also want to thank Bunker Hill Community College, Northeastern University, Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology and Mount Ida College for allowing us to retrieve data on the college enrollment and college graduation experiences of BPS graduates directly from their records. These institutions had not participated in the Clearinghouse for the years covered by our study, yet together they represented almost one-fifth of the college enrollees. Their inclusion allows us to account for over 97% of the Class of 2000.

Finally, we would like to thank Mayor Thomas M. Menino, the Boston School Committee, chaired by Elizabeth Reilinger, and BPS Superintendents Thomas Payzant, Michael Contompasis and Carol Johnson. Boston persists as one of the best urban school districts in America because its leaders consistently are willing to set new goals, to measure progress, and to collaborate creatively with business, higher education and community partners.

Andrew Sum

Neil Sullivan

Background and Methodology

Over the past few decades in Massachusetts and the U.S., the labor market and income success of adults as well as a growing number of their civic, fiscal, health, and social behaviors and experiences have become more strongly linked with their educational attainment.¹ On average, adults with postsecondary degrees obtain considerably higher annual earnings than their peers with only a high school diploma, and those young adults lacking high school degrees fare far worse than those graduating from high school, especially among males. Lifetime employment and earnings differences between adults with regular high school diplomas and those who failed to graduate from high school have widened considerably since the late 1970s, especially among men.² Encouraging young adults to remain in high school and complete at least some years of postsecondary schooling is more important in today's labor markets than in previous decades.

Since the late 1980s, the Boston Private Industry Council has conducted an annual follow-up survey of the experiences of each new class of graduates from the Boston public high schools in transitioning from high school to the labor market and the postsecondary educational world upon graduation.³ Primarily telephone follow-up interviews are used to identify the college enrollment and employment status of graduates in the late winter and spring of the calendar year following their graduation from high school. For those youth who were enrolled in college at the time of the follow-up interview, information is collected on the name of the college attended, the full-time/part-time status of their enrollment, and their financial aid status. This information has been used to generate estimates each year and over time of the college enrollment rates of BPS graduates, both overall and in an array of demographic and

¹ For studies on the economic, social, and fiscal impacts of graduating from high school and obtaining postsecondary degrees,

See: (i) Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, and Joseph McLaughlin et. al., An Assessment of the Labor Market, Income, Social, Health, Civic, Incarceration, and Fiscal Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Findings for Michigan Adults in the 21st Century, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Prepared for the C.S. Mott Foundation, January 2008; (ii) Andrew Sum, Ishwar Khatiwada, Joseph McLaughlin, Paulo Tobar et. al., An Assessment of the Labor Market, Income, Health, Social, Civic, and Fiscal Consequences of Dropping Out of High School: Findings for Massachusetts Adults in the 21st Century, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Prepared for the Boston Youth Transition Funders Group, January 2007.

² The lifetime earnings of male high school graduates with no completed years of postsecondary in Massachusetts exceed those of male dropouts by more than \$600,000, and male bachelor degree holders will earn \$1.3 million more than high school graduates over their working life.

³ Ishwar Khatiwada and Andrew Sum, The College Enrollment Behavior of Class of 2005 Boston Public High School Graduates Including A Multivariate Statistical Analysis of Findings of the Winter/ Spring 2006 Followup Survey, Center for Labor Market Studies, Northeastern University, Prepared for the Boston Private Industry Council, Research Paper #4, September 2007.

COLLEGE GRADUATION

College Graduation Rates of BPS Graduates Who Enrolled in a Two or Four Year College over the Seven Year Follow-up Period

The National Student Clearinghouse database also provides information on whether college enrollees had graduated from their institution as of June 2007.¹⁸ Of the 1,904 BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 who had enrolled in a two or four year college, 675 or 35.5% had graduated from a two or four year college by June 2007 (Table 8). As will be noted below, another 267 enrollees who had not received a degree by June 2007 were still enrolled in college in the winter/spring of 2007. Graduation rates for women were several percentage points higher than those of men (37% vs. 34%). The graduation rates of college enrollees varied more substantially across the four major race-ethnic groups, ranging from lows of 24% and 28% among Hispanics and Blacks to highs of nearly 52% among Asians and 53% among Whites. The college graduation rate for White students was nearly twice as high as that for Black students and 2.2 times as high as that for Hispanic graduates.

Table 8:
Number and Percent of College Enrollees from the Boston Public School Graduating Class of 2000 Who Obtained a College Degree Seven Years After Graduation, All and by Gender, Race-Ethnic Group and Type of High School Attended

Group	(A) College Attendees	(B) Graduates	(C) Graduates as % Of Attendees
All	1,904	675	35.5
Men	813	276	33.9
Women	1,091	399	36.6
Asian	275	143	52.0
Black	884	249	28.2
Hispanic	326	78	23.9
White	366	195	53.3
Exam School	618	366	59.2
All Other School	1,286	309	24.0

¹⁸ The graduation status is identified by responses to a check box on graduation. For slightly over half of the graduates, information was also provided on the type of degree/certificate received.

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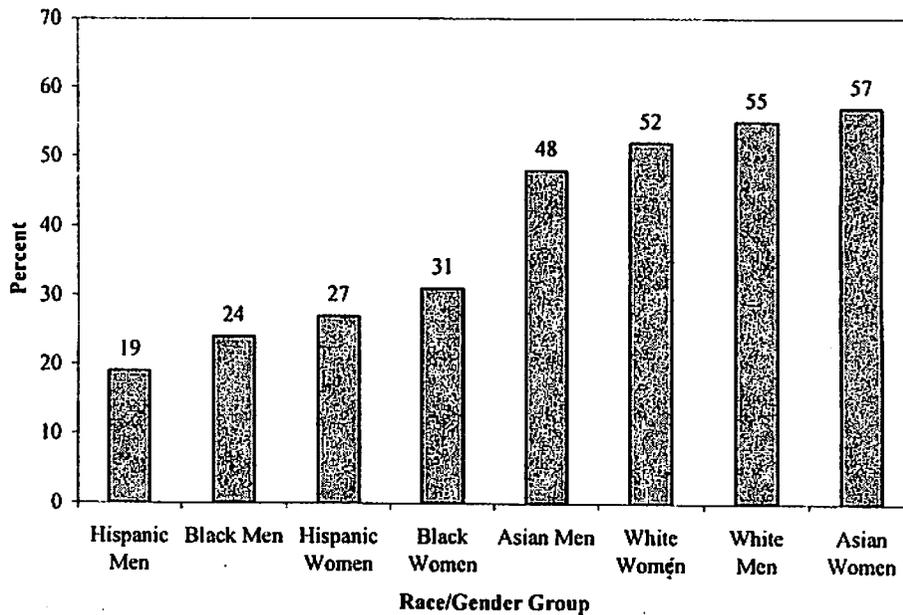
The graduation experiences of college students from the three exam schools were markedly different than those of their counterparts in the city's other high schools. Slightly over 59 of every 100 college students from the city's exam schools had obtained some type of college degree by June 2007 versus fewer than 24 percent of the college students from all of the other public high schools, a relative difference of nearly 2.5 times (Table 8). The exam school graduates were considerably more likely to enroll in college after high school graduation and to obtain a college degree within the first seven years.

In three of the four race-ethnic groups, female college enrollees were more likely to graduate than their male peers (Table 9 and Chart 6). The only race-ethnic group for whom males were more likely to graduate from college than women was White, non-Hispanics. Nearly 55% of White male, college students had received a degree by June 2007 versus 52% of White women. The gender gaps in college graduation rates for the other three race-ethnic groups ranged from seven to eight percentage points for Blacks and Hispanics to nine percentage points for Asians. The variations in college graduation rates across these eight gender/race-ethnic groups were quite substantial. Asian women (57%) and White males (55%) were three times as likely to graduate from college as Hispanic males (19%), and Black males (24%). These large gender-race gaps in college graduation rates only exacerbated the previous large differences in college enrollment rates (Chart 6).

Table 9:
Number and Percent of College Enrollees from the Class of 2000 Who Obtained a College Degree Seven Years After Graduation by Gender/Race-Ethnic Group

Race/Ethnic-Gender Group	(A) College Attendees	(B) Graduates	(C) Graduates as % Of Attendees
Asian men	145	69	47.6
Asian women	130	74	56.9
Black men	347	82	23.6
Black women	537	167	31.1
Hispanic men	121	23	19.0
Hispanic women	205	55	26.8
White men	176	97	55.1
White women	190	98	51.6

Chart 6:
Percent of Class of 2000 BPS College Enrollees Who Obtained A College Degree Within Seven Years Following Graduation by Race-Ethnic/Gender Group



Overall gender differences among Class of 2000 BPS graduates in the number of college degrees and four year degrees received were quite substantial, but they also varied quite considerably by race-ethnic group. Women overall obtained 145 college degrees for every 100 obtained by men, and the gap was even modestly larger for four year degrees where women obtained 146 four year degrees for every 100 obtained by men. Gender differences in the number of four year degrees received varied across race-ethnic groups from lows of 103 among Whites and 107 among Asians to highs of 214 among Hispanics and 220 among Blacks.

Table 10:
Comparisons of the Number of Boston Public School Women Per 100 Men Obtaining A College Degree and a Four Year College Degree, All and by Race/Ethnic Group, Class of 2000

Race/Ethnic Group	(A)	(B)
	Any Degree	Four Year Degree
All	145	146
Hispanic	239	214
Black	204	220
Asian	107	107
White	101	103

The far lower college degree attainment rates among Black and Hispanic males substantially lowers these young males' future earnings and their marriage prospects with adverse consequences for the economic and social well being of children in the city and the state.

The college graduation experiences of BPS graduates from the Class of 2000 also can be calculated by type of educational institution attended. There are several methods that can be adopted for use in calculating graduation rates by type of institution. In Table 11, we calculate the graduation rate for each type of educational institution as follows: we estimate the number of initial college students in each type of institution who had graduated from either the first institution they attended or a transfer institution by the spring of 2007. The college graduation rates for the initial college attendees varied widely across the four types of educational institutions, ranging from a low of 12.5% among two year public colleges to 35% among four year public colleges to a high of 56% among four year private colleges and universities. A second methodology for calculating college graduation rates that replaces initial college attendees who graduated elsewhere with graduates who transferred into the institution yields nearly identical results.

Table 11:
Number and Percent of Class of 2000 BPS College Enrollees Who Obtained a College Degree Within Seven Years by Type of Educational Institution First Attended

	(A)	(B)	(C)
Type of College	Number of Initial Attendees	Number of Graduates (From School Initially Attended + Graduated Elsewhere)	Graduation Rate (Column B / Column A)
Two Year Private	18	3 (3 + 0)	16.7
Two Year Public	656	82 (64 + 18)	12.5
Four Year Private	763	428 (387 + 41)	56.1
Four Year Public	467	162 (132 + 30)	34.7



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The Work Force College Success Initiative

The Work Force

- Celebrating its 25th year of operation
- Works with 140 students annually over critical 5-year period, from 8th through 12th grade
- Provides wide range of educational supports, as well as after-school life skills classes and “try-out” jobs with over 50 area employers who serve as worksite employer-mentors
- Sends over 90% of graduates on to college

Third-Party Study of Program Graduates from 1999 – 2006

- The good news: 91% of respondents were either employed and/or enrolled in post-secondary education and 66% were no longer living in public housing
- The bad news: only 36% completed their degrees, with the majority pursuing their education in fits and starts. Nearly 50% reported that financial and/or family challenges significantly impacted their studies, citing the lack of continued support in dealing these impediments to achieving their educational goals.

The response: The College Success Initiative

- The goal of the Initiative is to raise Work Force graduates’ post-secondary graduation rate from the present 36%, to 60% within six years. It will do so by assisting them to make more informed college decisions, bolster their self-advocacy skills, increase their connections with campus resources, create sustained support networks among alumni, and develop connections between alumni and current program participants to increase their college readiness.
- **Program components:**
 1. Alumni Liaison – A part-time Alumni Liaison will develop and administer the initiative’s infrastructure, implementing the components described below and integrating them into the daily fabric of The Work Force.
 2. Alumni Database – The creation of a comprehensive database, with contact and background information on each program graduate, will be central to our efforts to reach out to alumni
 3. Guidance in College Selection – The Alumni Liaison will research which colleges are particularly responsive to the needs of first-generation students and create linkages with them. Work Force students and their parents will then be encouraged to focus their college search on those colleges.
 4. Alumni Mentors – To promote informal mentoring and broaden the nexus of support, the Initiative will link matriculated Work Force graduates with program seniors who will be attending the same post-secondary school. Over time, Work Force alumni will be encouraged to form mutual support groups at their respective schools.
 5. Case Management Services – Assistance with accessing needed academic and personal supports at students’ colleges will be extended to program alumni on an as-needed basis.
 6. Support Groups and Workshops – The implementation of a series of structured annual events for Work Force alumni, including roundtable discussions and workshops on topics such as financial literacy, will allow alumni to share information and resources.