

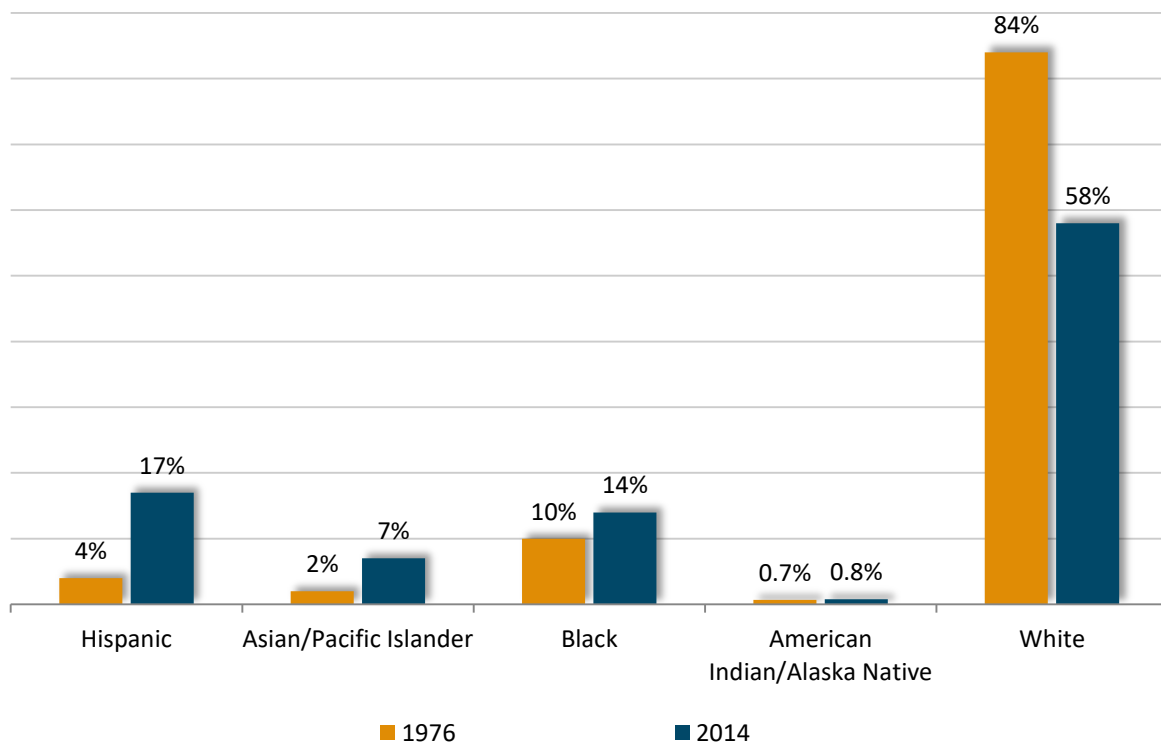
Recognizing the Changing Face of Postsecondary Students

Introduction

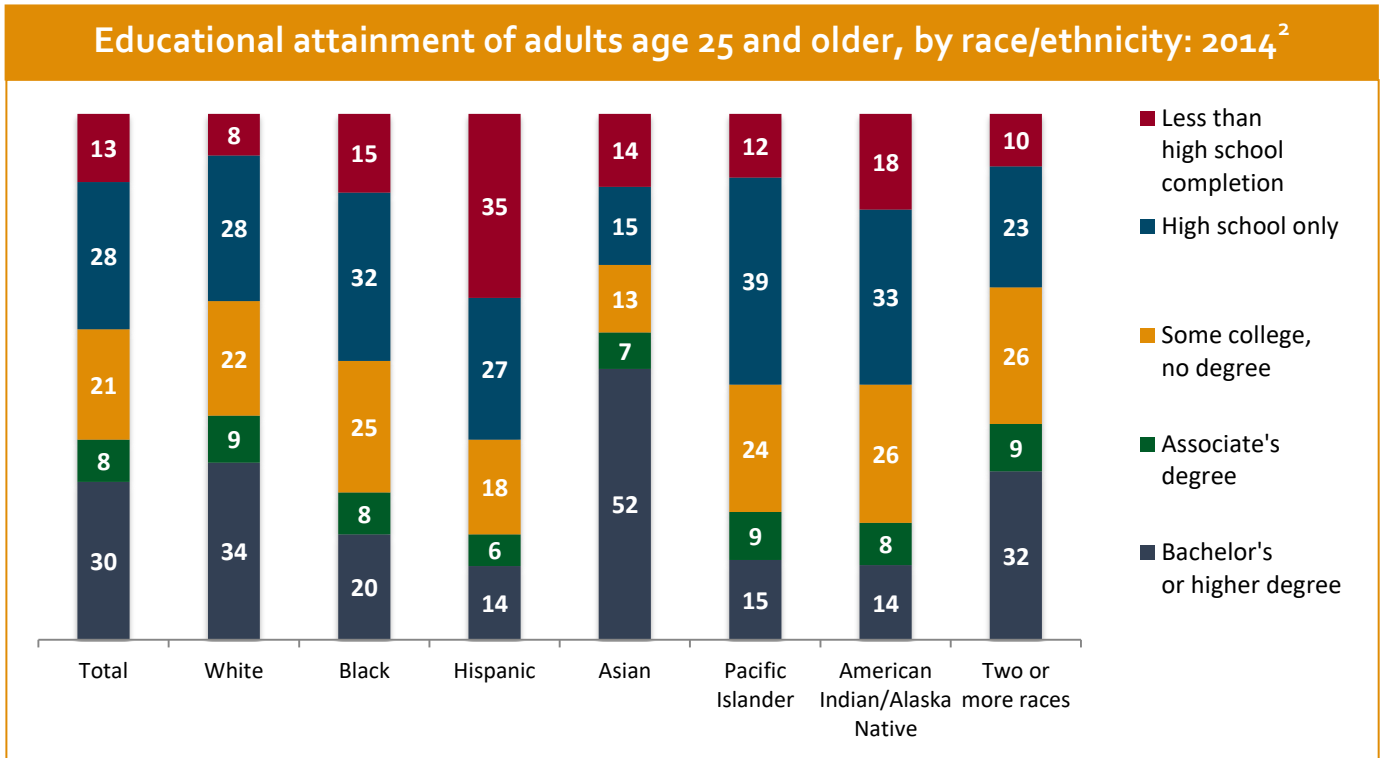
The reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) must address the needs of students of color. In recent years, historically underrepresented students have become a larger segment in higher education. HEA reauthorization is an opportunity to increase educational attainment levels; address durable disparities in achievement; and ensure the federal government, states, and institutions transform their policies and practices to respond to changing demographics:

Between 1976 and 2014, college participation for students of color significantly increased, as illustrated in the chart below.

Percentage of American college students from 1976 and 2014 by race/ethnicity¹



Despite this progress, however, disparities still exist. According to 2014 data from the National Center for Education Statistics, Asian and white adults are far more likely to earn a bachelor’s degree than Black, Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Hispanic adults.



There is a population of transition-age youth ages 16 to 24 who are not currently working or in school, but who wish to resume their education and advance along a career path. They face unique barriers because they did not follow the traditional path of high school to college.

These “opportunity youth” are disproportionately poor. Forty-one percent live in poor households, compared to 27 percent of their connected counterparts.³ Many come from high-poverty schools, which often lack adequate numbers of quality teachers, advanced placement courses, and school counselors—the supports most needed by youth in poverty.⁴ Furthermore, opportunity youth experience toxic stress, a culmination of adverse events that contribute factors to their dropping out of school.⁵ The higher education financing structure must be changed to accommodate their needs.

CLASP supports policies and federal higher education programs that expand access and promote student success for students of color. Many of them attend open-access institutions and are low income; immigrants; student parents; adult learners; returning citizens or incarcerated individuals; Dreamers; English Learners; or youth who have been disconnected from postsecondary and career pathways, including homeless and foster youth.

CLASP Principles for Racial Equity and Inclusion

- Make federal higher education programs more responsive to the needs of low-income students, students of color, opportunity youth, and adult learners.
- Incentivize best practices in states and institutions that offer clear and guided pathways, culturally competent comprehensive supports, dual enrollment approaches, and high-quality instruction and educational delivery systems.
- Create incentives for states to invest in higher education at pre-recession levels or higher.
- Ensure that opportunity youth can access postsecondary education opportunities and career pathways.
- Develop culturally competent racial equity and accountability standards for students of color by encouraging states, institutions, and accreditors to promote racial equity and inclusion on college campuses.
- Increase targeted funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and other Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs) to strengthen their capacity.
- Avoid punitive risk-sharing policies that create disincentives for access.

Expand best practices leading to transfer, completion, and career pathways

Expand best practices in states and institutions that increase college affordability, transfer, and completion as well as lead to career pathways for low-income and other disadvantaged students. CLASP supports the Community College Student Success Act (H.R. 2960).

Increase culturally competent academic advising, counseling, and mental health services in higher education

Too often, low-income students and students of color who experience academic, financial, and personal challenges do not receive counseling and advising. Authorizing a new grant program to revamp academic counseling, advising, and mental health services could help student of color, adult learners, and low-income students succeed in school. Congress should consider the Guided Pathways model, which promotes systemic change, clear and guided pathways, and comprehensive supports. Give HBCUs, HSIs, PBIs, TCUs, AANAPISIs, and other MSIs priority consideration.

Restore Pell grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals

The 1994 provision banning incarcerated individuals from accessing Pell Grant limits the ability of incarcerated individuals to support themselves and their families upon release. Restoring access to Pell Grants can help to transform the lives of incarcerated individuals and reduce recidivism, and these outcomes have been proven by rigorous research.⁶ In addition, reversing the ban would have implications for racial equity as African American and Latino communities experience disproportionate rates of incarceration. Combined, African Americans and Latina/os make up approximately 32% of the U.S. population, but comprise 56% of all incarcerated people.⁷ As both communities, particularly the Latina/o community, continue to grow and comprise a larger share of the majority non-white national, postsecondary, and workforce population, the moral and economic imperative to broaden access and reform correctional education systems has never been more urgent.

Remove questions about prior drug convictions from the FAFSA

A drug conviction does not prevent financial aid eligibility unless the offense occurred while a student was receiving federal financial aid. However, related questions can mislead and discourage students from communities that are disproportionately impacted by the criminal justice system. These questions compound numerous other barriers to FAFSA completion.⁸

Extend Pell eligibility to Dreamers

Since June 15, 2012, nearly 800,000 undocumented immigrant youth (Dreamers) who entered the United States as children have become beneficiaries of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals Program (DACA). Although more than a third of these immigrant youth are from low-income families, the Higher Education Act bars undocumented students from receiving all forms of federal financial aid. Expanding Pell eligibility to DREAMERS could help them afford a college degree.

Pass the Dream Act and support resource centers for Dreamers

Pass the Dream Act and authorize a grant program to provide counseling, advising, legal, and other supports for Dreamers at two-year and four-year institutions. Additionally, include “counseling, advising, legal, and other supports for Dreamers” as an allowable use in HEA -Title V undergraduate and graduate programs.

Promote racial equity and accountability standards in the accreditation process

State disinvestment in higher education has resulted in higher college costs and a reduction in quality. It has also deterred low-income students and students of color from enrolling in college.⁹ By requiring accreditation standards for racial equity and inclusion and focusing accreditors on making institutions more responsive to the needs of diverse student populations, Congress can ensure institutions do more to close gaps in educational attainment.

Standards should encourage lower college costs; high-quality education delivery systems; comprehensive student supports; healthy campus climates, hiring and retaining a diverse, culturally and linguistically prepared faculty and staff; early warning systems and interventions; dual enrollment approaches; and innovative models that promote transfer and completion for low-income students, students of color, adult learners, and other vulnerable student populations.

Support targeted funding for HBCUs and minority-serving institutions (MSIs)

Include targeted funding for HBCUs and MSIs in federal-state partnership community college/debt-free college and MSI innovation fund proposals. Congress should help build the capacity of institutions (HBCUs, HSIs, PBIs, TCUs, AANAPISIs and other MSIs) that enroll high concentrations of low-income students and students of color. Targeted investments can increase access, affordability, and academic success for students who are low income and historically underrepresented in higher education.

Endnotes

¹National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics, 2015 (NCES 2016-014), Chapter 3*, U.S. Department of Education 2016. <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=98>

² Ibid.

³ Sarah Burd-Sharps and Kristen Lewis, *Promising Gains, Persistent Gaps*, Measure of America of the Social Science Research Council, August 2017. <http://www.measureofamerica.org/youth-disconnection-2017/>

⁴ Rhonda Bryant, *Course, Counselor, and Teacher Gaps: Addressing the College Readiness Challenge in High-Poverty High Schools*, Center for Law and Social Policy, June 2015. <http://www.clasp.org/resources-and-publications/publication-1/CollegeReadinessPaperFINALJune.pdf>

⁵ America's Promise Alliance, *Don't Call Them Dropouts*, Center for Promise at Tufts University, May 2014.

<http://www.americaspromise.org/report/dont-call-them-dropouts>

⁶ Lois M. Davis, Robert Bozick, Jennifer L. Steele, et al., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education: A Meta Analysis of Programs That Provide Education to Incarcerated Adults*, The RAND Corporation, 2013.

http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR200/RR266/RAND_RR266.sum.pdf

⁷ "Criminal Justice Fact Sheet," NAACP. <http://www.naacp.org/criminal-justice-fact-sheet/>

⁸ Davis et al., *Evaluating the Effectiveness of Correctional Education*

⁹ Michael Mitchell, Michael Leachman, and Kathleen Masterson, *A Lost Decade in Higher Education Funding State Cuts Have Driven Up Tuition and Reduced Quality*, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, August 23, 2017.

<https://www.cbpp.org/research/state-budget-and-tax/a-lost-decade-in-higher-education-funding>