

Trends in Minority Student Participation, Performance and Circumstances

More rigorous course taking

- In 1982, 12% of Black students took a core academic curriculum; this grew to 45% by 1994. For Hispanics the increase was from 7% to 44%; for Asian students, 21% to 57%; for American Indians 7% to 44%. Figures for Whites, by comparison, were 16% in 1982 and 54% in 1994. (*Condition of Education* 1996, p.98)
- The proportion of Hispanics, American Indians and Alaskan Natives taking Algebra II more than doubled between 1982 and 1994, rising from 18% for Hispanics and 11% for American Indians in 1982, to 51% for Hispanics and 39 percent for American Indians and Alaskan Natives in 1994 (*Condition of Education*, 1997).
- In 1982, 16,000 AP candidates were minority students (14% of all candidates); by 1996 the number of minority candidates grew to almost 140,000 (29% of all candidates). (College Board: *AP Program: National Summary*, various years.)

Narrowing of achievement gap

The achievement gap between white and minority students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) narrowed substantially from the early 1970's to the mid-1990's, although improvement stalled in the late 1980's.

- During this period, the gap in math scores between black and white students narrowed for all three age groups tested. For example, the gap in scores between 17 year old blacks and whites in 1973 was 40 points, compared to 26 points in 1994. The average mathematics proficiency of Hispanics also increased for all age levels. [NCES (1994), *NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress*; NCES (1997), *NAEP 1996 Math Report Card*]
- The gap in science scores narrowed between black and white students from 1970 to 1994 for all age groups. [NCES (1994), *NAEP 1994 Trends in Academic Progress*]
- The gap in reading proficiency narrowed between blacks and whites at all age groups. For example there was a 52-point gap between 17-year-old black and white students in 1971 compared to a 30-point gap in 1994. (*Condition of Education*, 1997).
- While the gap in performance between white and minority students has narrowed since the 1970s in all subjects that NAEP tests; in the late 1980's, the gap began to widen. However, the most recent (1996) NAEP test in math is more encouraging--it shows that blacks, Hispanics and American Indians are improving at least at the same rate as whites. [NCES, *1996 Math Report Card*; NCES, *NAEP 1994 trends in academic progress*].

Stronger college admissions test participation and scores

- The percentage of SAT I test takers from minority groups increased from 18% to 31% between 1982 and 1996. [“College-Board Reports Continuing Upward Trend in Average Scores on SAT I,” *News from the College Board*, 8/22/96].

Verbal scores increased between 1982 and 1996 for all minority groups except Mexican Americans. Asian American students posted the largest gains in verbal scores (18 points) followed by black (16 points) and American Indian students (15 points). Math scores increased across all race/ethnicity groups between 1982 and 1996. The gains ranged from 23 points for Asians and blacks to 7 points for Puerto Ricans. [“College-Board Reports Continuing Upward Trend in Average Scores on SAT I,” *News from the College Board*, 8/22/96]

- ACT test scores overall have risen from a composite score of 20.6 in 1992 to 20.9 in 1996. ACT attributes the increase in scores to more students, especially females and minorities, taking higher-level courses. [“ACT National Average Up for Third Time in Four Years,” *News from the ACT*, 8/15/96]

Dropout rates and high school completion: improving but large gaps remain, especially for Hispanics

- The dropout rate has fallen somewhat for blacks, but only slightly for Hispanics. For blacks, the dropout rate has fallen from 18.4 percent in 1982 to 12.1 percent in 1995--a 34 percent decrease. However, for Hispanics, the dropout rate fell just 2 points, from 32 percent in 1982 to 30 percent in 1995. Meanwhile, for whites, the rate has fallen from 11.4 to 8.6 percent over the same period--a 25 percent decrease. [NCES, *Digest of Education Statistics: 1996*, Table 101]
- The percentage of minorities with a high school diploma or GED has increased in recent years, but still lags behind that of the white population; the gap is especially serious among Hispanics. Between 1992 and 1996, the percentage of white 25 to 29 year-olds who have graduated from high school increased from 90.6 to 92.6 percent; for black graduates, the percentage climbed from 80.9 to 86.0 percent; and for Hispanic graduates, the percentage increased from 60.9 to 61.6 percent--still over 30 percentage points below that for white students. [NCES, *Condition of Education 1997*, p. 94].

College enrollment: generally improving, but lately more slowly

- Over the long term, minority college enrollment rates have been increasing. Between 1980 and 1995, enrollment rates in postsecondary education for black high school graduates 18-24 rose from 28 to 35 percent, and the rate for Hispanics rose from 30 to 35 percent. However the enrollment rate for whites increased by almost 12

percentage points, from 32 to 44 percent, over the same period. (*Condition of Education*, 1997).

- More recently, minority enrollment is still increasing overall, but the rate of growth is slowing. While overall enrollment of students of color in colleges and universities rose by 2.9 percent between 1994 and 1995 (the latest year for which data is available), this is down from gains of 4.6 percent between 1993 and 1994 and 7.1 percent between 1992 and 1993. [ACE Report].

College completion: uneven progress

- Progress in college completion has been uneven. Between 1975 and 1996, the percentage of black 25-to 29-year old high school graduates who had completed 4 or more years of college rose by 2.3 points from 14.7 to 17.0 percent. For Hispanics, the rate slightly declined (16.6 to 16.4 percent). Meanwhile, for whites, over this same period, the completion rate rose by 6.6 points (27.5 to 34.1 percent). (*Condition of Education*, 1997).