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Reports Highlight Colleges Where Minority Success Rates Have Soared

By Jennifer González

Educational attainment levels for young Americans in minority groups still lag, but a number of institutions are making significant progress toward improving that picture by increasing the number of black and Hispanic students they graduate, according to a pair of new reports from the Education Trust.

The shift is significant because students of color are a growing demographic group, and more of them need to graduate in order for the nation to reach its college-completion goals, the advocacy group says. Graduating also means a fighting chance at decent employment, given that many future jobs will require a postsecondary degree.

The two reports, based on a study called "Advancing to Completion," list Virginia Commonwealth University, Texas Tech University, and the State University of New York at Stony Brook among the institutions that had significantly increased graduation rates and closed attainment gaps among their minority-student populations.

Almost 40 percent of white Americans ages 25 to 29 have earned at least a bachelor's degree. Yet for African-Americans in that age range, the attainment rate is only half that, and for young Hispanics, it's one-third the rate for whites, the reports say.

Despite those grim statistics, the Education Trust's study shows what can happen when institutions make graduating minority students a priority, says Jennifer Engle, an author of the reports. "These institutions are demonstrating that low graduation rates are not inevitable for minority students," she said.

For students, Ms. Engle says, this is particularly good news because it means that they "are accomplishing what they set out to do when they enrolled in college. That is a huge win. Staying in college is sometimes harder than getting in."

Minority students are making great strides at Virginia Commonwealth University, a large public research institution in

Richmond, largely because of the institution's University College model, the report on African-American students says. "The model is built around a cohesive core curriculum with a limited set of course options and small class sizes," the report says.

Virginia Commonwealth also keeps close tabs on students' progress by requiring them to meet with advisers and monitoring their class attendance.

The result: From 2004 to 2010, the graduation rate for black students increased from 34.5 percent to 49.8 percent, catching up to that of their white counterparts, the report says. Over the same period, the graduation rate for Hispanic students improved by more than 20 percentage points, and they also now graduate at about the same rate, 48.7 percent, as their white counterparts, the report says.

At some colleges, minority students are surpassing white students. In 2010 black students graduated from Stony Brook at a higher rate than white students, 71.3 percent compared with 58.7 percent. Hispanic students accomplished the same feat at the University of San Francisco. In 2010 the six-year graduation rate for Hispanic students there was 70.9 percent, compared with only 66.5 percent for white students.

Ms. Engle says it incumbent on all colleges to understand the importance of graduating more minority students. "These are the students coming up from our K-12 system," she says. "This is the group we are depending on to become internationally competitive."

The reports are available online. Their full titles are "Advancing to Completion: Increasing Degree Attainment by Improving Graduation Rates and Closing Gaps for African-American Students" and "Advancing to Completion: Increasing Degree Attainment by Improving Graduation Rates and Closing Gaps for Hispanic Students."

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joane 2 days ago

Kudos to my alma mater, VCU. Go Rams!

Like



12052592 2 days ago

Once again, yet another "analysis" that does not include Asian students of color. Could it be that their demographic does not fit the study's political objectives?

10 people liked this. Like



sibyl 2 days ago in reply to 12052592

As of 2010, white students are 61% of college students, African-Americans 14%, Hispanics and Latinos 13%. Asians are the next largest group at 6%, which is a substantial slice, but the relative scarcity of the group seems a much simpler explanation for omitting their consideration.

1 person liked this. Like



benno 2 days ago in reply to sibyl

I would have another not so positive take on the omission of Asian-Americans from most "minority" retention studies and that is...THEY are not included because their stellar performance rates would blow the whole mythology of "minority=incapable" that is so entrenched in American H/E that it is palpable.

You also don't see "Jews" as minority group in any of these "minority" studies even though demographically they certainly are minorities as are the Amish, the Mennonites and even Italians.

There is an inescapable racist political agenda in these "studies" and THAT fact is NEVER disclosed either.

I'm off now on my unicorn, til Romulus insists on stopping to sip champagne at the campus fountain again or to just take a leak at the "minority" admissions office.

5 people liked this. Like



11144703 2 days ago in reply to sibyl

"but the relative scarcity of the group [Asian people of color]"

I know you're joking since surely you've walked around Yale, Harvard, MIT, Carnegie Mellon, etc. Did you note the relative scarcity of Asian students of color?

2 people liked this. Like



Packard27 2 days ago

That's nice.

Like



mycantarella 2 days ago

I am proud to have been part of several initiatives particularly at NYU and Hunter College in New York where I have seen what can happen when you give focus to students of color. Both the Academic Achievement Program at NYU and the Black Male Initiative at Hunter which I have had the honor to lead have been examples of what can happen when students are told that they have the capacity for excellence, are given the support --often psycho/social and the exposure to opportunities that have often not been part of their experience. The students of AAP at NYU have matched or exceeded for decades now the success rates of non-minority students. I have seen them

progress to professions in every field and manifest excellence. Three of my young men from the Hunter Black Male Initiative this fall are first year students, fully paid for, in doctoral programs. Others have jobs or are on the path to law school or medical school or other graduate programs. These have most often been students at both institutions who have not come from upscale backgrounds and have had to work hard to get to college, but have with support gone on to be extraordinary. It is so worth it to do this work.

Marcia Y. Cantarella, PhD, Author, I CAN Finish College: The Overcome Any Obstacle and Get Your Degree Guide

2 people liked this. [Like](#)

 **benno** 2 days ago *in reply to mycantarella*

can I turn off the applause tape now?

4 people liked this. [Like](#)

 **mtyler** 2 days ago

Interesting report. The elephant in the room not addressed is the graduation rates for Private (for-profit) colleges. One has to wonder how these institutions compare since many of them are focused on minority graduation. Not considering all educational institutions of higher learning in the study serverly deminishes its credibility.

[Like](#)

 **sibyl** 2 days ago *in reply to mtyler*

The reports say this: "Because for-profit institutions are a distinct subset of colleges, we have explored trends in their outcomes in a separate report."

[Like](#)

 **benno** 2 days ago *in reply to sibyl*

...and I'm sure we'll only have to wait forever for that next report, since the word is out already that MOST minority students in these schools never complete their programs and only find themselves unemployed and saddled with HUGE student loan debt, despite the TV ads with frauds claiming to have become college professors while doing their pilates routines in just a couple of months or becoming police chiefs while spending time behind bars for bank robbery...seriously now!

[Like](#)

 **Geoz32** 2 days ago *in reply to mtyler*

but "for-profit" does not include private not-for-profit - which is the majority of private four year institutions.

[Like](#)

 **benno** 2 days ago

Yet another misguided, misinformed "study" in the CHE which continues to ascribe the category of "Hispanic" with racial attributes.

You know, a long time ago I heard that "none are so blind as those who will not see", but I have a different take on this today..."none are so blind as those who refuse to open their eyes, while publishing fallacious findings about subjects they know so little about".

Please control for racial differences amongst the "Hispanic" rubric or your profound "findings" are as deep as puddles in a Sahara sandstorm.

"Hispanic" has and never will be a race, no matter how many "studies" with naive political agendas aimed at ascribing some pernicious racial sub-scripts are "published" that are not worth the recycled paper they are printed on..por favor.

3 people liked this.



bdavi52 2 days ago

Is anyone truly surprised to discover that IF we focus our attention upon a target group of students...if we control their curriculum.....if we provide an abundance of extra resources....if we measure the success of this program by increasing graduation rates....if we reward that success with public recognition and extra compensation....that, by golly, success happens!?! Are we somehow amazed to find that we can artificially 'boost' student performance in a select, highly-supported group above the performance average in the non-supported population? Does it come as a shock to learn, again, still, forever... that preferential treatment yields preferential results?

Perhaps next time we should target red-heads (let's cluster them together, let's 'core' their curriculum, let's improve the teacher/student ratio, let's provide extra counseling, extra support, let's focus the attention of our college upon them....and then sing hallelujah when we see their graduation rates rise). Or Iowa Farm Boys, or Lesbians, or Tall Kids, or Those Whose Last Name Begins with the Letter 'R'.

Better still (and much easier to control), let's target TOMATOES. This is just a wild guess, but I would suspect that IF you plant them in fertile soil...if you spray them for bugs....if you fertilize them regularly and water them carefully....if you provide just the right amount of sun...that AMAZINGLY, TOMATOES WILL HAPPEN! If only that would help our graduation rates...

6 people liked this.



11144703 2 days ago

Jenny, thank you for failing to mention that Asians are an invisible minority in the reports you discuss. Even though a spectacular 49% of Asians in the U.S. have a BA or equivalent from an accredited four year college, far higher than the percentage of the white people who have a degree (29%), it's important to utterly erase these people from memory.

No other group has a stake in higher education more than Asian Americans in the U.S. Their numbers even on the most elite campuses in the world and in the toughest departments (mathematics, engineering, physics, computer science, etc.) are amazing. Thus we must overlook them despite them being the fastest growing minority group in the U.S. We must justify their erasure by looking at their raw numbers, nearly 8% of Americans, knowing full well that if blacks or Latinas constituted 8% of Americans we would not ignore them. However, Asian success in the racist U.S. is such an embarrassing phenomenon for us progressives that we must erase them, like Winston Smith would have done, from memory as long as possible.

1 person liked this.

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