

Workforce Data Quality Initiative Research Brief 1

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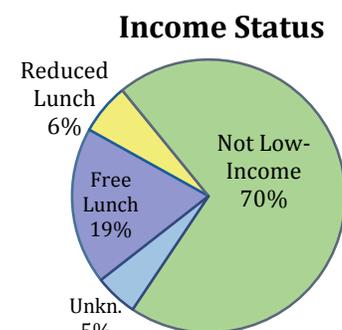
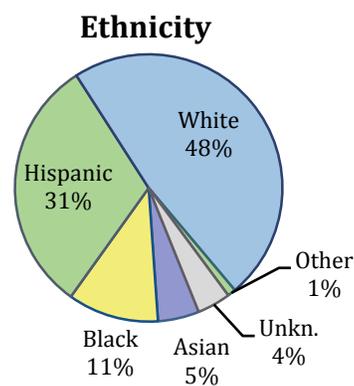
Postsecondary Education for 2008 and 2009 Central Texas High School Graduates

Background: As part of the Central Texas Student Futures project, the Ray Marshall Center developed partnerships with Central Texas independent school districts to analyze the postsecondary pathways and outcomes of the region's high school graduates. Through linked individual-level records across multiple datasets, Center researchers examine outcomes to identify factors associated with postsecondary success. This work has been extended through the Texas Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI) to examine the various paths that students take after high school and identify factors that are associated with those pathways.

This research brief describes the sample and initial findings of postsecondary

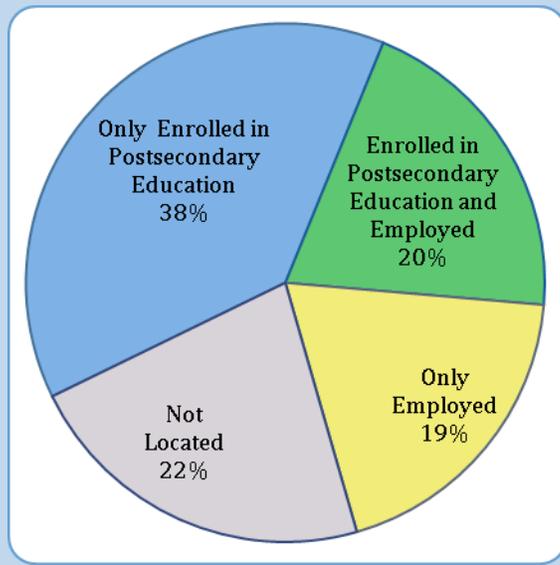
education. A future research brief will provide more detailed analyses related to employment outcomes of studied students.

Sample: The sample for the current study includes a total of 23,809 Central Texas graduates: 11,575 from the 2008 cohort and 12,234 from the 2009 cohort. The sample was predominantly White (48%) or Hispanic (31%), with smaller proportions of Black (11%), Asian (5%) and other/unknown ethnicity students (5%). Approximately half were male. About one-quarter of the sample received free or reduced lunch in school (a proxy for low-income status).



Where were they in the fall?

In the fall following high school graduation, over half of the sample was enrolled in postsecondary education – 38% were enrolled-only and another 20% were enrolled-and-employed as well as enrolled. One in five graduates was employed as well as enrolled. One in five graduates was employed-only (in Texas). Another 22% were not found, meaning that they were not located in any postsecondary education or workforce dataset accessed for this research.

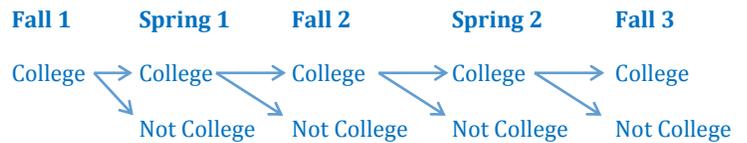


Data Sources: Research data were drawn from secondary school records, the Senior Exit Survey from the Student Futures Project, National Student Clearinghouse records, Texas unemployment insurance wage records, and Texas death records.

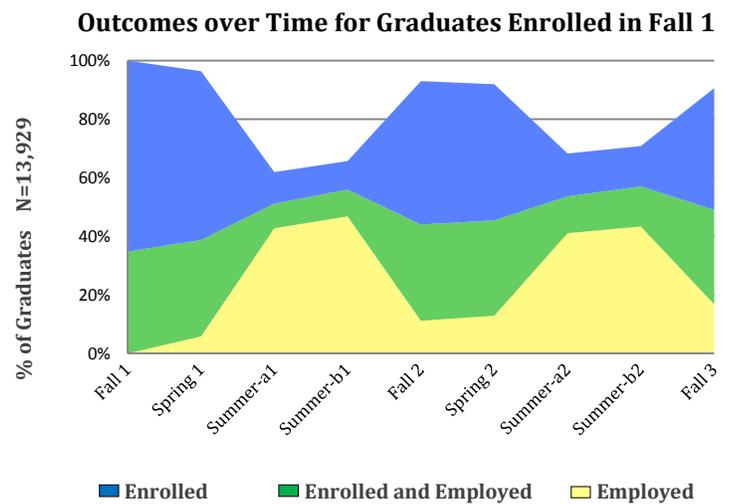
Time Periods Examined: Postsecondary employment, education, and related data were examined through December 2011. This provided 3.5 years of data for the 2008 cohort and 2.5 years of data for the 2009 cohort.

Postsecondary Outcomes: Researchers focused on two common but not mutually exclusive choices that high school graduates make in the fall immediately following high school graduation: enrolling in postsecondary education or working. Researchers continued to follow the choices students made in each semester thereafter, uncovering common pathways that individuals take in the years post-high school.

One common pathway taken by high school graduates is the **traditional college pathway**. This pathway begins with the student's choice to enroll in postsecondary education in the fall immediately following high school graduation (Fall 1) and continues with the student enrolling in school in each subsequent period examined, as illustrated below.



The figure below shows the status of 2008 and 2009 graduates over a 2+ year period, beginning with the fall semester after graduation. Three mutually exclusive statuses are displayed: employed-only, enrolled-only in postsecondary education, and both employed and enrolled in postsecondary education. A fourth status, neither employed nor enrolled in college, is represented by blank space.



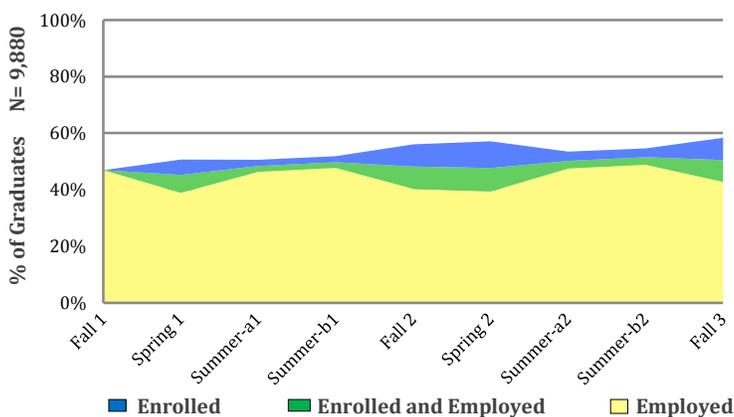
Among graduates on the traditional college pathway, most (65%) were enrolled-only in the first fall after graduation (Fall 1), as represented by the blue area, while a substantial minority (35%) was both employed and in college, as represented by the green area. Over time, the proportion of this group only enrolled in college fluctuated from highs in the fall and spring to lows in the summer quarters, but never again reached the high proportion that was enrolled-only in Fall 1.

Other students followed the **delayed college pathway** where the student did not enroll in postsecondary education in the fall after high school but did enroll in at least one semester in the following spring or later.



Individuals who did not initially enroll in college may have ultimately enrolled in a subsequent semester: roughly 18 percent of Central Texas graduates who had not initially enrolled were found to be enrolled in Spring 2. Unlike the large seasonal changes in enrollment and employment for those who initially enrolled in college, the rates of employment are relatively stable for those who did not initially enroll in college.

Outcomes Over Time for Graduates Not Enrolled in Fall 1



Factors in College Persistence: The decision to enroll in education in the fall immediately after high school had a significant influence on whether or not the graduate participated in postsecondary education at any subsequent time period. *High school graduates who enrolled in postsecondary education in the fall immediately following graduation were overwhelmingly likely (98%) to either continue school or intermittently enroll in school.* On the other hand, high school graduates who did not enroll in postsecondary education in the first fall following high school were much less likely (31%) to ever enroll in school.

Students who chose the traditional school pathway varied by demographic, background, and initial college of enrollment characteristics. Those who were most likely to attend school in the fall after high school graduation and continue with school through each fall and spring semester examined (i.e., persist in college) were students with the following characteristics:

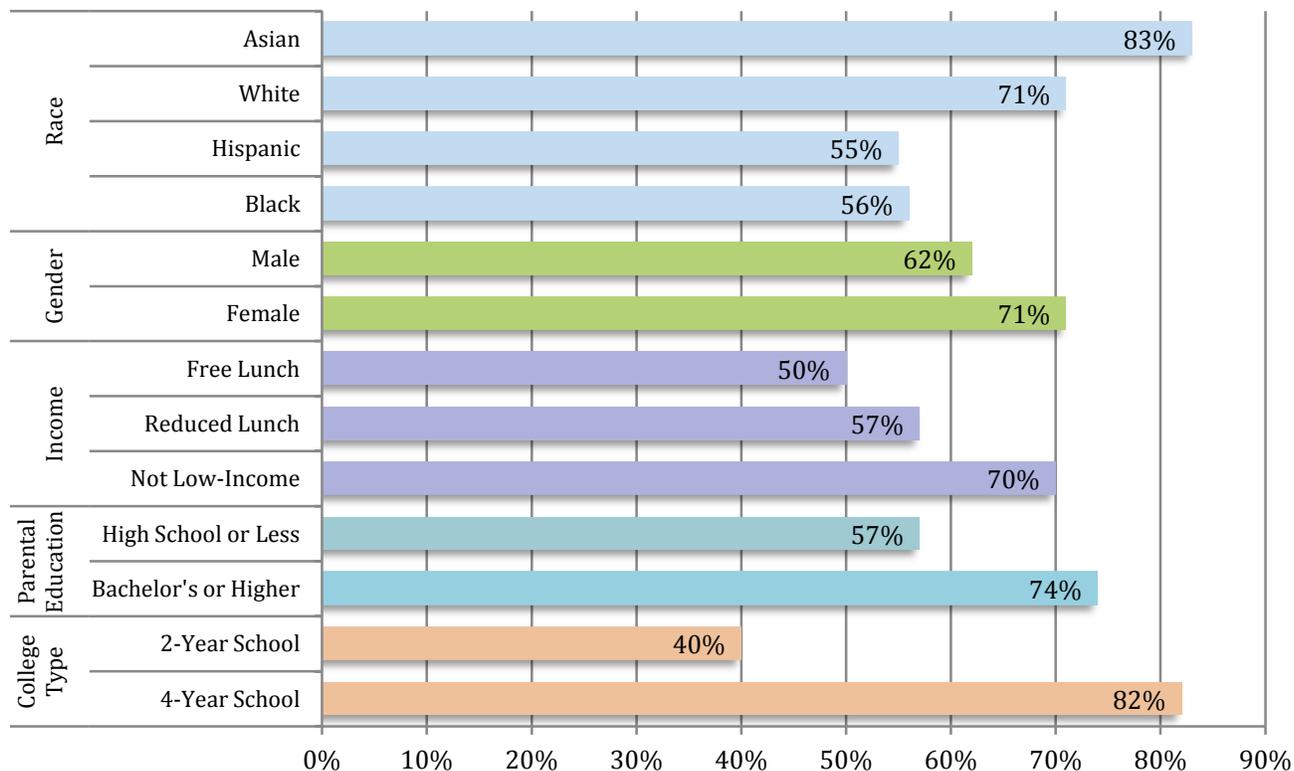
- Asian race
- Female
- Not low-income
- Parents have a Bachelor’s degree or higher
- Attended a 4-year college in the fall

Other characteristics that contributed to the likelihood that a student persisted through college are graduating in the top half of the class and taking Advanced Placement and/or International Baccalaureate classes in high

school. Students whose home language was Spanish were less likely to enroll in college, but once enrolled, and accounting for other factors, their home language appears to have played no role in whether students persisted through college.

The chart below details the likelihood of college persistence by demographic characteristics for those students who enrolled in college in the fall immediately following high school graduation. The stark difference in likelihood of persistence based on initial college type (4-Year or 2-Year institution) is particularly noteworthy.

Likelihood of Persisting in College if Enrolled in Fall after Graduation



Conclusion: Despite the economic challenges faced by the Central Texas Classes of 2008 and 2009, the majority continued in postsecondary education during the study period. Over half of the sample both worked and attended school. Given this, the next research brief in this series will take a closer look at the postsecondary employment experiences of 2008 and 2009 Central Texas high school graduates.

About the Workforce Data Quality Initiative (WDQI)

The main objectives of the WDQI grant program funded by the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment & Training Administration are:

- Develop or improve state workforce longitudinal data systems.
- Enable workforce data to be matched with education data to ultimately create longitudinal data systems with individual-level information beginning with pre-kindergarten through post-secondary schooling all the way through entry and sustained participation in the workforce and employment services system.
- Improve the quality and breadth of the data in the workforce data systems.
- Use longitudinal data to provide useful information about program operations and analyze the performance of education and employment and training programs.
- Provide user-friendly information to consumers to help them select the training and education programs that best suit their needs.

More information at:
<http://www.doleta.gov/performance/workforcedatagrants09.cfm>