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# **A LOOK AT BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS:**

## **Identifying Top- and Bottom-Performing Institutions**



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The message from these data is clear.

Closing the completion gap between Black and White students requires simultaneous work on three fronts. The first is addressing inequities in completion within individual institutions.

The second is changing enrollment patterns so selective institutions enroll more Black students.

And third, institutions where Black students are more likely to attend must improve the rates at which Black students complete.

# A Look at Black Student Success: Identifying Top- and Bottom-Performing Institutions

BY ANDREW H. NICHOLS AND DENZEL EVANS-BELL

In the fall of 2008, over 160,000 Black students began their quest for a bachelor's degree by enrolling as full-time freshmen in a four-year college or university.<sup>1</sup> This represents some progress: Those numbers are up 37 percent over the past decade, compared with 28 percent growth for all undergraduates. What is not captured in the gains in access, though, is what happens to these undergraduates after they arrive on campus.

Certainly, the Black undergraduate experience isn't monolithic.<sup>2</sup> But many Black students encounter a unique combination of financial, academic, and social challenges that can make the path to degree completion rugged. Increasing college costs have a disproportionate impact on Black students' ability to pay, contributing to the accumulation of higher debt levels compared with peers.<sup>3</sup> Damning inequities in K-12 education mean that too many Black students leave high school without acquiring the skills they need to immediately succeed in postsecondary education and are placed in developmental, noncredit courses.<sup>4</sup> As if these hurdles weren't high enough, the constant barrage of racist incidents on many college campuses make it quite clear that on-campus racism is still an issue Black students have to deal with — and chilly or hostile campus racial climates have been found to have negative effects on Black student outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Given these challenges, how successful are Black undergraduates in their quest to earn bachelor's degrees?

Data from the National Center for Education Statistics show that nearly 41 percent of first-time, full-time Black students who enrolled at four-year institutions in the fall of 2008 earned a degree within six years. This was the lowest rate among all racial and ethnic groups, approximately 22 percentage points below the graduation rate for White students (*Figure 1*).

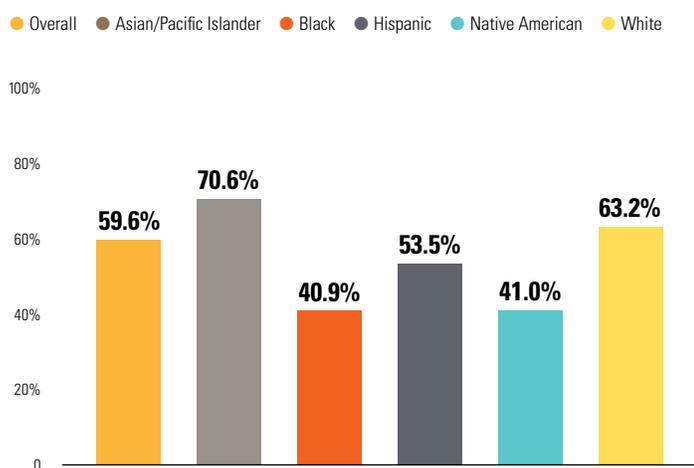
But what happens if you dig underneath the national average and look at the institutional data? Do graduation rates for Black students at most institutions lag those of White students by roughly 22 points?

In this report, as in others our team has done over the years, we look beyond national averages to understand and highlight patterns in student success at four-year institutions. We identify top-performing colleges and universities from which other institutions could potentially learn a great deal, as well as underperforming institutions that need to get far more serious about success rates for their Black students. Once again, we find that what institutions do matters: Some colleges are far more successful than otherwise similar ones in enrolling and graduating Black students.

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report examines graduation rates for Black students and the completion gap between Black and White students at all nonspecialized public and private nonprofit institutions, as well as four-year, for-profit institutions. Together, these institutions — roughly 84 percent of all four-year institutions — enroll over 90 percent of all Black first-time, full-time students. In separate sections, we discuss what the data tell us about graduation outcomes for Black students at historically Black colleges and universities and at for-profit institutions. The bulk of our analysis, however, focuses on success rates at the 676 traditional public and private nonprofit colleges and universities that enroll nearly 60 percent of Black first-time, full-time students. Among those institutions, we highlight both the top-performing and the bottom-performing. In addition, using data from College Results Online ([collegeresults.org](http://collegeresults.org)), we showcase outcome differences between similar colleges that enroll the same types of students.

**Figure 1:** Six Year Graduation Rates at Four Year Institutions (2014)



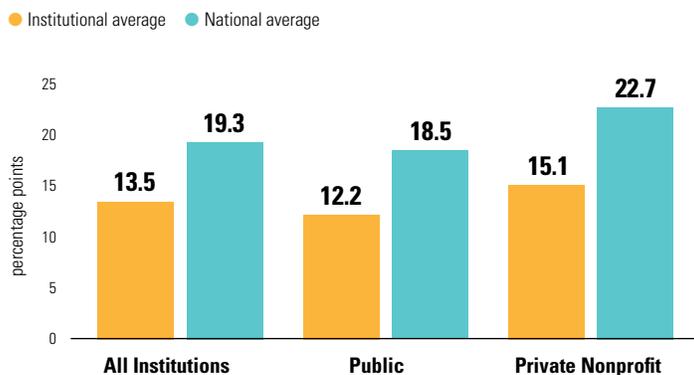
Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2008 starting cohort. Table 326.10

Andrew Howard Nichols, Ph.D., is director of higher education research and data analytics, and Denzel Evans-Bell was a higher education research analyst at The Education Trust.

## SUCCESS PATTERNS IN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NONPROFIT INSTITUTIONS

The graduation rate for Black students at the 676 traditional (we did not include HBCUs or specialized institutions) public and private nonprofit institutions in our sample is 45.4 percent, 19.3 points lower than the 64.7 percent graduation rate for White students.<sup>6</sup> But among Black and White students who attend the same institutions, the average gap is just 13.5 percentage points (*Figure 2*).

**Figure 2:** Gaps in Graduation Rates Between Black and White Students by percentage points (2014)



Notes: Analysis includes 676 institutions (362 public and 314 private nonprofit). Only non-HBCU, non-specialized institutions with 30 students in both Black and White cohorts were included. Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

**Figure 3: Closing the Gaps in Six-Year Grad Rates Between Black and White Students (2014)**

		If gap closed by...		
			50%	100%
Average Institutional	Grad Rate for Black Students	45.2%	52.1%	59.1%
	Grad Rate Gap (percentage points)	13.5	6.6	-0.4*
National	Grad Rate for Black Students	45.4%	51.8%	58.1%
	Grad Rate Gap (percentage points)	19.3	13.0	6.6
Number of Additional Black Bachelor's Degree Completers			5,996	11,992

\*To simulate gap-closing, Black graduation rates at institutions where White students graduated at higher rates than Black students were adjusted so that the Black graduation rate was equivalent to the White graduation rate. Graduation rates at institutions where Black students are currently graduating at higher rates than White students were not adjusted. As a result, the final gap (-0.4) reflects a slightly higher graduation rate for Black students.

Notes: Analysis includes 676 institutions (362 public and 314 private nonprofit). Only non-HBCU, non-specialized institutions with 30 students in both Black and White cohorts were included. Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

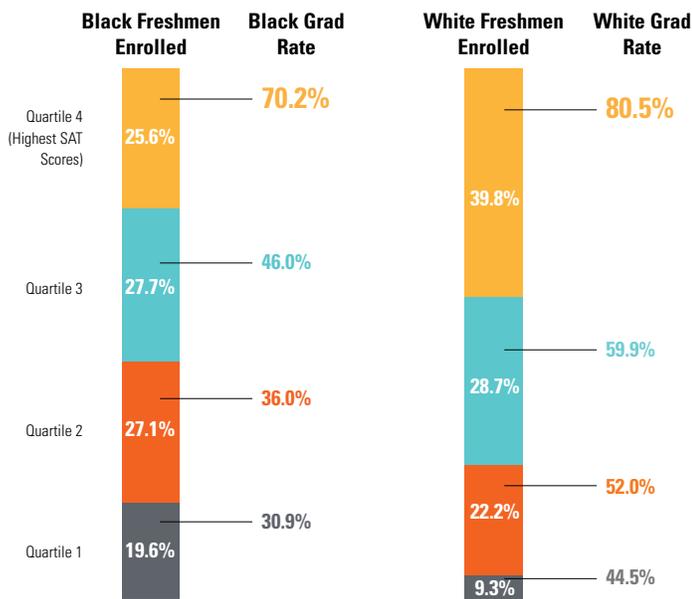
Why is the average institutional gap only two-thirds as large as the national cross-institutional gap? Simply because the national gap is more than the accumulation of all the individual graduation rate gaps between Black and White students at institutions; the remainder comes from differential enrollment patterns.

Stated differently, if the graduation rate for Black students were equal to the current graduation rate for White students at each institution where a gap exists, the national graduation rate for Black students would still lag behind the national rate for White students. Eliminating institutional gaps at each campus in our sample would produce an additional 11,992 Black graduates, and would reduce the national gap in Black and White completion from 19.3 percentage points to 6.6 percentage points (*Figure 3*). These remaining 6.6 percentage points are the result of divergent enrollment patterns between Black and White students. Far too few Black students attend selective institutions, which typically have higher graduation rates, and far too many end up at the least selective institutions, where few students complete in six years.

The message from these data is clear. Closing the completion gap between Black and White students requires simultaneous work on three fronts. The first is addressing inequities in completion within individual institutions. The second is changing enrollment patterns so selective institutions enroll more Black students. And third, institutions where Black students are more likely to attend must improve the rates at which Black students complete.

The data in *Figure 4* illustrate the nature and extent of the latter challenges, showing enrollment patterns and graduation rates for first-time, full-time Black and White students by SAT quartile for the institutions in our study. The data show considerable enrollment stratification, with Black freshmen less likely to enroll at institutions where most freshmen graduate and more likely to enroll at institutions where few do. About 25 percent of Black freshmen enroll at the most selective institutions (quartile 4) compared with nearly 40 percent of White freshmen. On the other end of the spectrum, roughly 1 in 5 Black freshmen enroll at the least selective schools (quartile 1) compared with fewer than 1 in 10 White freshmen. Colleges in this quartile have an average graduation rate of roughly 30 percent for Black students and approaching 45 percent for White students.

**Figure 4:** Enrollment and Six-Year Graduation Rates at Institutions by SAT Quartile (2014)

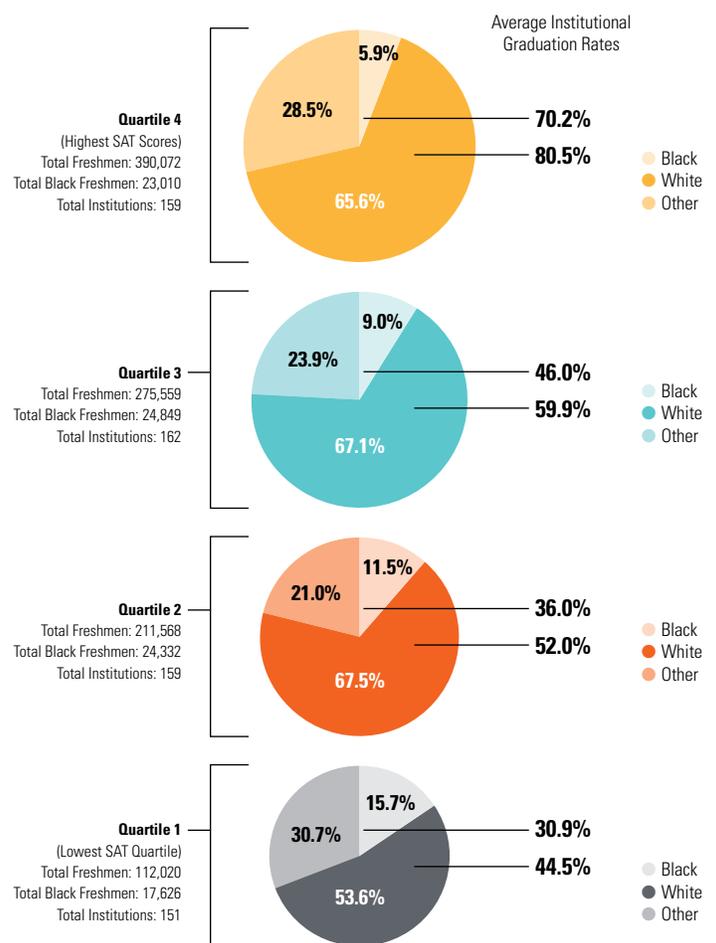


Notes: Analysis includes 631 institutions. Only non-HBCU, non-specialized institutions with average SAT scores in College Results Online and with 30 students in both Black and White cohorts were included. The quartiles were: Q1) ≤990 (n=151), Q2) >990 and ≤1050 (n=159), Q3) >1050 and ≤1146 (n=162), Q4) >1146 (n=159).  
Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

When examining these same data from a different perspective, the effect of enrollment stratification becomes even more apparent (Figure 5). As selectivity decreases, the percentage of Black freshmen at these institutions increases. Only 5.9 percent of freshmen at the selective colleges and universities in quartile 4 are Black compared with 15.7 percent of freshmen at the least selective institutions in quartile 1. However, White freshmen only make up about 54 percent of freshmen at institutions in quartile 1, despite accounting for nearly two-thirds at the institutions in each of the other quartiles.

Certainly, some of these enrollment differences between Black and White students can be linked to differences in academic preparation, as Black K-12 students are more likely than their White counterparts to attend underfunded schools, be taught by inexperienced and out-of-field teachers, and be assigned less rigorous coursework.<sup>7</sup> However, there is a growing body of evidence that attributes some of this enrollment stratification to undermatching, a pattern where high-performing, low-income, and underrepresented minority students tend to apply to and attend colleges that are below their academic qualifications.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, this pattern deserves attention — from both high schools and colleges.

**Figure 5:** Enrollment and Six-Year Graduation Rates Within SAT Quartile (2014)



Notes: Analysis includes 631 institutions. Only non-HBCU, non-specialized institutions with average SAT scores in College Results Online and with 30 students in both Black and White cohorts were included. The quartiles were: Q1) ≤990 (n=151) Q2) >990 and ≤1050 (n=159) Q3) >1050 and ≤1146 (n=162) Q4) >1146 (n=159)  
Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

## TOP- AND BOTTOM-PERFORMING INSTITUTIONS FOR BLACK STUDENTS

As noted earlier, the average institutional difference in graduation rates for Black and White students in our sample is quite large (13.5 percentage points). But these disparities vary widely across institutions. While some institutions have small or no gaps, far too many have gaps that are much, much larger than average (Figure 6).

On the positive end, nearly 22 percent of colleges and universities have completion gaps at or below 5 percentage points. Among institutions with small or no gaps, 55 colleges and universities are graduating Black students at equal rates — if not higher rates — than White students.

## WHY WE LOOK AT GRADUATION RATE GAPS BETWEEN BLACK AND WHITE STUDENTS

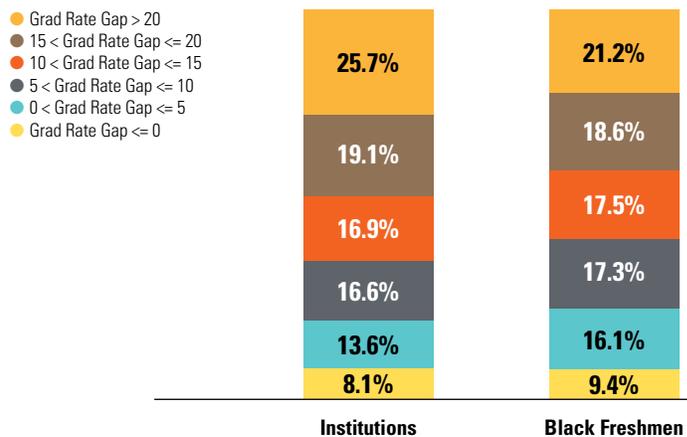
In K-12 education, we have a fairly robust set of indicators for monitoring results for all groups of students, including indicators of achievement (e.g., test performance, advanced courses successfully completed) and graduation rates. Looking at both turns out to be important, especially to make sure that test performance isn't going up simply because more students are being pushed out. In higher education, publicly available data are much more limited: There are no consistent measures that show how much students learn or what competencies they acquire while enrolled at colleges and universities; we have only a less-than-perfect database — called IPEDS — that reports year-to-year persistence and four-, five-, and six-year degree completion rates for first-time, full-time students. Although the imperfections of the federal graduation rates are well chronicled, these rates actually provide the best and most comprehensive insights into how effective institutions are at helping students persist from matriculation to degree completion.<sup>9</sup> And while what students learn along the path to a degree undoubtedly matters, whether they get that degree is absolutely critical, especially in the current economic climate.

As our work has repeatedly shown throughout the years, graduation rates differ for different subgroups of students. Though the rates for each group — and their progress over time — are intrinsically important, readers often want to know how they compare for students from different racial and economic backgrounds. Typically, we do this by comparing the graduation rates of Black, Latino, and Native students (when their data are available) to those of White students.

Some critics have argued that this approach reinforces Whiteness as the standard, focusing less on the need to improve outcomes for people of color regardless of how well White students are doing. We certainly appreciate that perspective. But the truth is that we haven't found a workable alternative.

If, for example, graduation rates for Black students were compared with the graduation rates of all students at an institution (i.e., the overall graduation rate), the gap or difference could be understated since completion rates for Black students are often lower and would be included in the institution's graduation rate for all students. An approach like this also includes (in the overall graduation rate) the graduation rates for Latino students and Native students, who are also traditionally underrepresented and underserved populations. This, too, can have the effect — especially in institutions with large numbers of underrepresented students — of understating differences and making those institutions look better than they are.

**Figure 6:** Distribution of Institutions and Black Freshmen by Graduation Rate Gap (2014)  
(Average Institutional Gap: 13.5)



Notes: Analysis includes 676 institutions (362 public and 314 private nonprofit). Only non-HBCU, non-specialized institutions with 30 students in both Black and White cohorts were included.

Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS Graduation Rate Survey

On the other end of the spectrum are many colleges and universities that have gaps between Black and White students that are considerably larger than the average. Indeed, slightly more than a quarter of the institutions we studied have gaps that exceed 20 percentage points.

Many of the institutions in this latter, underperforming category could potentially learn a lot from the institutions that seem to be getting things right — or closer to right — for their Black students. From our sample of 676 institutions, we list 18 colleges and universities that stand out. In order to identify institutions with a consistent record of success, we used 2012, 2013, and 2014 graduation rate data. And we used weighted, three-year averages to account for the impact of year-to-year cohort size differences on the data. (See *Table 1* in the Appendix.) This list of top-performers includes institutions that have:

- A completion gap between Black and White students at or below 5.0 percentage points;
- A graduation rate for Black students at least 10.0 percentage points above the average rate of their peer institutions (as defined in College Results Online, [www.collegeresults.org](http://www.collegeresults.org));
- A graduation rate cohort that was at least 5.0 percent Black;<sup>10</sup> and
- A graduation rate cohort that included at least 100 Black students and 100 White students.<sup>11</sup>

One standout institution is the University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG), where the graduation rate for Black students exceeds the rate for White students by 3.0 percentage

points. Not only do Black students at this institution complete their degree requirements at rates higher than their White peers, but these students also surpass the average graduation rate of Black students at all institutions by 13.1 percentage points (57.7 percent vs. 44.6 percent).<sup>12</sup> Compared with its peers, UNCG is even more impressive. The graduation rate for Black students at UNCG is 18.6 percentage points higher than the rate for Black students at its top 15 peer institutions.

In addition to the 18 top-performers, we also identified 21 institutions that have especially low completion rates for Black students and large completion gaps between Black and White students. (See *Table 2* in the Appendix.) This list of bottom-performers includes institutions that have:

- A completion gap between Black and White students at or above 20.0 percentage points;
- A graduation rate for Black students at least 10.0 percentage points below the average rate of their peer institutions;
- A graduation rate cohort at least 5.0 percent Black;<sup>13</sup> and
- A graduation rate cohort that included at least 100 Black students and 100 White students.<sup>14</sup>

Among this group of institutions is Youngstown State University. On average, fewer than 1 in 10 Black first-time, full-time students at Youngstown State University complete a bachelor's degree within six years of enrolling. What's as troubling is that White students at Youngstown State University graduate at nearly five times the rate of Black students. A 29.7 percentage point gap separating students enrolled at the same institution is far too large.

## SIMILAR COLLEGES, DIFFERENT OUTCOMES

As our research has shown time and time again, similar colleges that serve the same types of students often have very different graduation rates. We used our College Results Online interactive web tool to provide four examples of institutions that are very similar but have disparate outcomes for the Black students they serve (*Figure 7*).

Take, for example, George Mason University and the University of Kansas. With 8.3 percent of full-time, first-year students identifying as Black, the percentage of Black freshmen at George Mason is slightly more than twice that at the University of Kansas. Both are fairly selective research institutions with admissions test scores near the top quartile of institutions. In addition, the two institutions enroll similar percentages of freshmen receiving federal Pell Grant dollars — a proxy for low-income status. Generally, on paper, these two institutions are quite similar, but we found a notable difference: their completion rate for Black students. At the University of Kansas, only 45.3 percent of Black students graduate within six years compared with 65.9 percent of Black students at George Mason University. While Black students graduate at rates nearly

identical to their White peers at George Mason, the completion gap is nearly 16 percentage points at the University of Kansas.

Another example of peer schools with different outcomes is the University of California-Riverside and University of Illinois at Chicago. Again, these schools are similar in size and their first-year students appear to have roughly the same level of academic preparation and financial need. However, unlike the previous example, the institution with better outcomes for Black students — the University of California-Riverside — actually has a lower percentage of Black students than its peer, The University of Illinois at Chicago. Black undergraduates are nearly 8 percent of first-year students at Riverside. But they account for 10.6 percent at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where their graduation rate is about 30 percentage points lower than that of Black students at Riverside, and the completion gap between Black and White students is approaching 20 percentage points.

Francis Marion University and Delta State University are also fairly comparable institutions where Black students have drastically different completion patterns. Both schools are very accessible options for Black students. Nearly half of the entering class at Francis Marion is Black, as is roughly 40 percent of the class at Delta State University. Francis Marion has a higher percentage of low-income, first-year students, but both of these universities have fewer than 3,500 students and freshmen with similar levels of academic preparation. That said, the graduation rate for Black students at Francis Marion (41.7 percent) is 16.3 percentage points higher than the rate at Delta State. Also, the graduation rate for Black students is 2.3 percentage points above that for White students at Francis Marion. In contrast, at Delta State, Black students have a graduation rate 10.3 percentage points below that of their White peers.

Our final example also highlights institutions with high Black student enrollment. Middle Tennessee State University is a bit larger and has more first-year students receiving Pell Grants than Eastern Michigan University, but students at both institutions have, on average, identical standardized test scores. Despite these similarities and others, the graduation rate for Black students at Middle Tennessee State University is more than two times the rate at Eastern Michigan University. And while Black and White students have similar graduation rates at Middle Tennessee State, the completion gap at Eastern Michigan is nearly 25 percentage points.

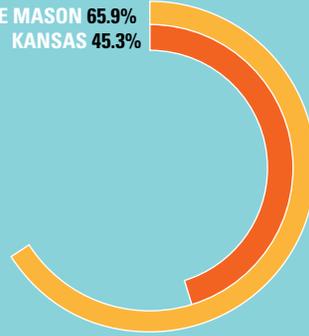
**Figure 7: Similar Institutions, But Disparate Results** (College Results Online Peer Institutions 2014)

**Black Student Graduation Rate**

**George Mason University (VA)**

- 1,155 Median SAT Score
- 18,837 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 25.2% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 8.3% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 65.9% Black Graduation Rate
- 0.4 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

GEORGE MASON 65.9%  
KANSAS 45.3%



**University of Kansas (KS)**

- 1,145 Median SAT Score
- 17,868 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 22.8% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 4.0% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 45.3% Black Graduation Rate
- 15.7 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

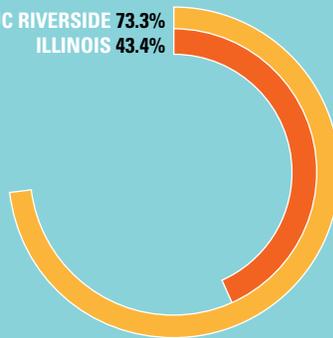
**University of Illinois at Chicago (IL)**

- 1,092 Median SAT Score
- 15,825 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 55.7% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 10.6% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 43.4% Black Graduation Rate
- 18.6 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

**University of California–Riverside (CA)**

- 1,078 Median SAT Score
- 18,344 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 55.3% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 7.9% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 73.3% Black Graduation Rate
- 4.7 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

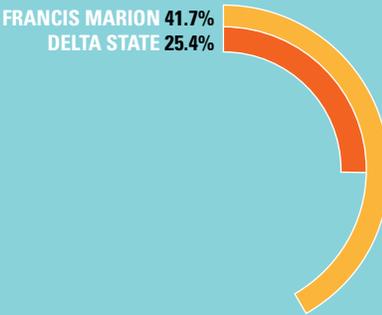
UC RIVERSIDE 73.3%  
ILLINOIS 43.4%



**Francis Marion University (SC)**

- 938 Median SAT Score
- 3,449 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 66.5% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 49.0% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 41.7% Black Graduation Rate
- 2.3 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

FRANCIS MARION 41.7%  
DELTA STATE 25.4%



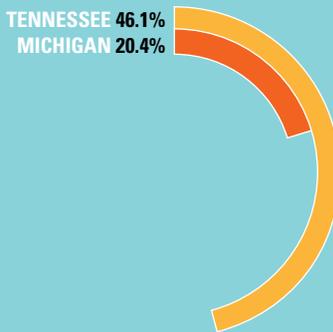
**Delta State University (MS)**

- 950 Median SAT Score
- 2,323 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 54.9% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 37.0% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 25.4% Black Graduation Rate
- 10.3 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

**Middle Tennessee State University (TN)**

- 1,011 Median SAT Score
- 18,641 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 49.8% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 18.3% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 46.1% Black Graduation Rate
- 0.1 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

TENNESSEE 46.1%  
MICHIGAN 20.4%



**Eastern Michigan University (MI)**

- 1,011 Median SAT Score
- 15,424 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 47.5% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 31.8% Percent of Black Full-Time Freshmen
- 20.4% Black Graduation Rate
- 24.7 Grad Rate Gap Between Black and White Students

\*See College Results Online's Frequently Asked Questions Section for more details about our Median SAT Score calculation: <http://www.collegeresults.org/aboutthedata.aspx>.  
Source: Education Trust's analysis of College Results Online database.

## GRADUATION RATES AT FOUR-YEAR HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Enrolling approximately 15 percent of Black degree-seeking undergraduates and 20 percent of first-time, full-time Black students at four-year institutions, historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) play a critical role in providing Black students with access to four-year, postsecondary opportunities. And enrollments at many of these institutions are increasing as more Black students are choosing to attend HBCUs in search of the cultural enrichment, encouraging academic support, and inclusive sense of community that are unique to these institutions.<sup>15</sup>

The average HBCU six-year graduation rate for Black students is 32.1 percent, much lower than the average institutional graduation rate (45.4 percent) for Black students at the 676 institutions in our sample.<sup>16</sup> But when we look underneath the data, an important pattern emerges: Compared with institutions serving similar student populations, HBCUs have higher success rates.

All four-year HBCUs have freshman cohorts where at least 40 percent of their students are low-income (i.e., receive Pell grants), but only 45 percent of the 676 non-HBCUs that were included in the larger study sample enroll a similar or higher percentage of low-income freshmen. And after looking more closely, we found that roughly half of the HBCUs have a freshman class where three-quarters of the students are from low-income backgrounds. Only 1 percent of the 676 non-HBCUs serve such a high percentage.

In the analysis below, we take these differences into account. In *Figure 8*, we only compare HBCUs and non-HBCUs that have freshman enrollments where between 40 percent and 75 percent are low-income. Our analysis shows that HBCUs have better completion rates for Black students than non-HBCUs. The average institutional graduation rate for Black students at HBCUs was 37.8 percent, compared with 32.0 percent for non-HBCUs.

While HBCUs fare favorably compared with non-HBCUs with regard to Black student success, it is important to note that graduation rates at many HBCUs need to improve. Among HBCUs that enroll the same types of students, the graduation rates vary widely (*Figure 9*). Take, for example two peer institutions, North Carolina Central University and Alabama State University. The graduation rate for Black students at North Carolina Central (47.6 percent) is over 20 percentage points higher than Alabama State's rate (26.0 percent) even though the schools enroll similar types of students. The first-year students on each campus have negligible differences in academic preparation and financial need.

Another example highlights Alabama A&M University and Texas Southern University. Despite similar student demographics, Texas Southern's graduation rate for Black students (15.4 percent) is less than half that for Black students at Alabama A&M (35.8 percent). Even though Alabama A&M significantly outperforms Texas Southern, its graduation rate of just 1 out of 3 clearly demands more attention. These examples show that there is room for improvement at HBCUs that do not perform as well as their peer institutions as well as at those like Alabama A&M that outperform their peers.

**Figure 8:** Average Institutional Graduation Rates Among HBCUs and Non-HBCUs, Based on Enrollment of Low-Income Students

	Grad Rate Among Black Students		Number of Institutions		Average SAT		Average Percent Pell	
	HBCU	Non-HBCU	HBCU	Non-HBCU	HBCU	Non-HBCU	HBCU	Non-HBCU
Institutions With 40%–75% Pell Freshmen	37.8%	32.0%	38	294	860	988	74.1%	50.4%
Institutions With 40%–65% Pell Freshmen	41.8%	32.1%	17	277	920	992	54.5%	49.2%
Institutions With 65%–75% Pell Freshmen	34.4%	30.3%	21	17	856	910	70.9%	70.7%

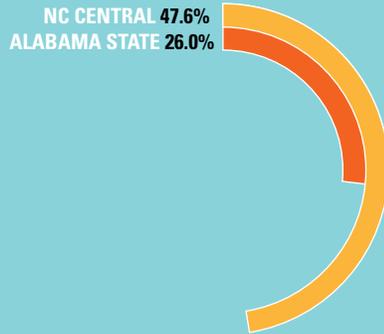
Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS and College Results Online database

**Figure 9:** Comparisons Among Similar Pairs of HBCUs (College Results Online Peer Institutions 2014)

Black Student Graduation Rate

**NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY (NC)**

- 859 Median SAT Score
- 5,605 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 78.9% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 87.1% Percent of First-Year Black Freshmen
- 47.6% Black Graduation Rate

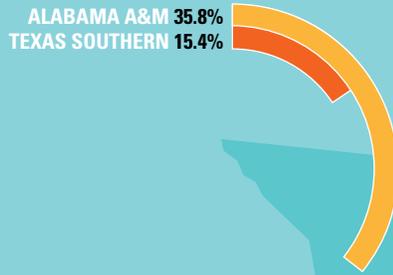


**ALABAMA STATE UNIVERSITY (AL)**

- 830 Median SAT Score
- 5,033 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 71.1% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 91.0% Percent of First-Year Black Freshmen
- 26.0% Black Graduation Rate

**ALABAMA A&M UNIVERSITY (AL)**

- 823 Median SAT Score
- 3,883 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 80.4% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 95.2% Percent of First-Year Black Freshmen
- 35.8% Black Graduation Rate



**TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY (TX)**

- 832 Median SAT Score
- 5,643 Full-Time Equivalent Undergraduate Enrollment, Fall
- 79.8% Percent of Pell Recipients Among Freshmen
- 85.2% Percent of First-Year Black Freshmen
- 15.4% Black Graduation Rate

Source: Education Trust's analysis of College Results Online database



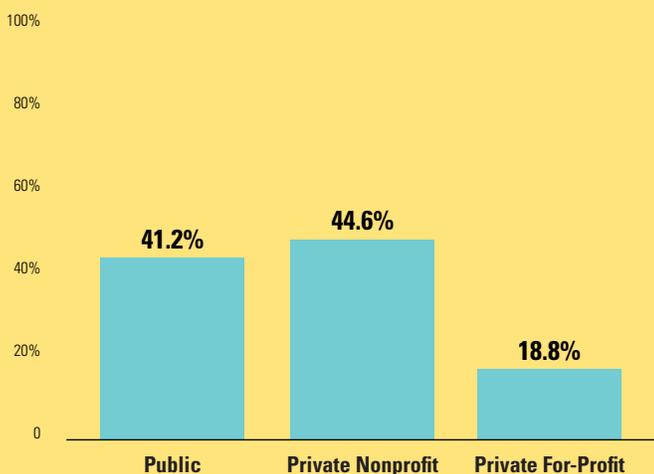
## GRADUATION RATES AT FOUR-YEAR, FOR-PROFIT INSTITUTIONS

Four-year, for-profit institutions educate nearly 17 percent of all Black undergraduates and over 8 percent of Black first-time, full-time students. Leaders of for-profit institutions pride themselves on providing postsecondary access to students who have been left behind by more traditional colleges and universities. However, the data reveal problems when it comes to student success.

As is clear in *Figure 10*, graduation rates at for-profit institutions are quite low compared with private nonprofit and public institutions. Graduating just 18.8 percent of their Black students in six years, for-profit institutions perform far worse than institutions in other sectors. The average graduation rate is roughly 22 percentage points below public four-year institutions and 25 points below private four-year institutions. For-profit institutions not only have graduation rates for Black students that are much lower than the rates for Black students enrolled at public and private nonprofit institutions, they also have significant gaps in completion between the Black students they enroll and their White peers. For-profit institutions graduate White students at nearly two times the rate of Black students.

Certainly, like HBCUs, many for-profit institutions educate a significant percentage of students who lack adequate postsecondary preparation and students from low-income backgrounds. We attempted to include them in the analysis in *Figure 7*, but many for-profits have very small first-time, full-time cohorts — below our 30-student threshold. This prevented us from producing any useful analysis based on average institutional graduation rates.

**Figure 10:** 2008 Six-Year Graduation Rates for Black Students at Four-Year Public and Private Institutions



Source: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, IPEDS, Fall 2008 starting cohorts. Table 326.10

## WHAT INSTITUTIONS DO FOR THEIR STUDENTS MATTERS

Far too often, institutional leaders attempt to justify low completion rates for Black students by highlighting what they perceive to be the inadequacies of the very students they choose to enroll. Yes, some students are better prepared than others, and this explains some graduation rate differences among institutions. But the wide variation in graduation outcomes among schools enrolling roughly the same types of students shows that something else is at work.

After studying institutional differences for more than a decade, we believe that “something else” is bound up in what institutions do for and with the students they serve. This is why we continue to encourage institutional leaders to learn from leading institutions, set clear improvement goals, mine their data to help identify problems and refine practices, and optimize the use of whatever resources they have.

For a detailed look at what campus leaders have done to improve outcomes for students of color, please take a look at the following publications (available at [www.edtrust.org](http://www.edtrust.org)):

### Using Data to Improve Student Outcomes: Learning From Leading Colleges

This report highlights leading universities that have drastically improved student success by consistently reviewing and using their own data to launch campus-wide initiatives, focus the entire college community on student success, and remove stubborn obstacles that impede large numbers of low-income students and students of color from graduating college with a degree in hand.

### Higher Education Practice Guide: Learning From High-Performing and Fast-Gaining Institutions

In this guide, we examine the practices at eight institutions that have improved outcomes in both access and success and sustained them over a significant period of time. We also share 10 of the analyses that leaders at these institutions found to be particularly powerful in provoking discussion and action on college completion.

### Leading the Way in Diversity and Degrees: Rutgers University–Newark

For years, Rutgers University–Newark struggled with its nontraditional student population. As recently as the 1990s, students reported feeling unwelcome based on their race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual preference. Fast-forward two decades, and Newark has become a haven for nontraditional students of all types, leading to increased overall completion rates and a graduation gap among Black and White students that is almost negligible. This profile shares the institutional practices that led to this turnaround. ■

# Appendix

**Table 1:** Top-Performing Institutions for Black Students

Institution Name	State	Institutional Control	Median SAT Score (2014)	Percent Pell Among First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen (2014)	Percentage of Black Freshmen (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	Grad Rate for Black Students (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	Completion Gap Between Black/White Students (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	CRO Peer Differential for Grad Rate Among Black Students (percentage points)
Georgia State University	GA	Public	1060	57.0%	29.5%	55.5%	-6.1	+13.1
Winthrop University	SC	Public	1030	44.3%	25.4%	56.2%	-3.5	+16.0
CUNY John Jay College of Criminal Justice	NY	Public	950	63.4%	18.2%	45.4%	-3.1	+12.2
University of North Carolina at Greensboro	NC	Public	1029	47.8%	22.6%	57.7%	-3.0	+18.6
Francis Marion University	SC	Public	938	66.5%	43.4%	43.2%	-2.7	+14.7
University of South Florida—Main Campus	FL	Public	1168	39.7%	10.8%	63.7%	-2.1	+15.3
University of South Carolina—Aiken	SC	Public	973	45.3%	27.8%	42.6%	-1.8	+11.3
SUNY at Albany	NY	Public	1102	36.9%	9.2%	67.2%	-1.8	+21.0
University of California-Riverside	CA	Public	1078	55.3%	8.0%	69.5%	-1.7	+21.1
Keiser University—Ft Lauderdale	FL	Private Nonprofit	N/A	77.1%	27.6%	49.4%	-1.4	+18.9
George Mason University	VA	Public	1155	25.2%	7.5%	65.7%	0.3	+11.9
SUNY Buffalo State	NY	Public	975	59.5%	16.5%	48.0%	0.9	+10.4
Old Dominion University	VA	Public	1016	33.8%	19.4%	53.1%	1.6	+10.9
East Carolina University	NC	Public	1050	34.2%	13.6%	56.4%	1.9	+10.3
Texas State University	TX	Public	1045	38.7%	5.6%	55.5%	2.1	+13.5
Rutgers University—Newark	NJ	Public	1059	52.1%	13.8%	62.7%	2.2	+28.1
Sam Houston State University	TX	Public	999	47.5%	17.3%	48.7%	2.7	+11.4
Florida State University	FL	Public	1212	27.1%	9.0%	74.5%	2.7	+11.4

\*Difference between the institution's grad rate among Black students and the average rate for the institution's CRO peer group. Three-year weighted averages were used. Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS and College Results Online database

**Table 2: Bottom-Performing Institutions for Black Students**

Institution	State	Institutional Control	Median SAT Score (2014)	Percent Pell Among First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen (2014)	Percentage of Black Freshmen (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	Grad Rate for Black Students (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	Completion Gap Between Black/White Students (3yr Weighted Average: 2012, 2013, 2014)	CRO Peer Differential for Grad Rate Among Black Students (percentage points)
Wayne State University	MI	Public	1050	54.5%	37.2%	11.1%	33.2	-19.2
Northern Illinois University	IL	Public	1010	54.0%	21.5%	28.1%	32.5	-11.0
Liberty University	VA	Private Nonprofit	1030	40.4%	11.6%	23.7%	31.5	-16.0
University of Toledo	OH	Public	1031	41.1%	15.1%	20.6%	30.6	-10.9
Youngstown State University	OH	Public	N/A	55.5%	15.1%	8.2%	29.7	-16.9
University of Akron Main Campus	OH	Public	1016	42.6%	14.0%	15.3%	29.6	-18.4
Mercy College	NY	Private Nonprofit	N/A	70.8%	25.3%	23.0%	26.9	-10.2
Saginaw Valley State University	MI	Public	990	39.6%	9.7%	16.1%	26.6	-17.4
Oakland University	MI	Public	1070	33.9%	12.3%	22.4%	25.1	-11.3
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	WI	Public	1030	38.3%	6.0%	21.0%	24.3	-19.2
University of Missouri-Kansas City	MO	Public	1105	38.7%	17.4%	27.8%	24.2	-21.3
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	MN	Public	1270	20.8%	5.1%	54.9%	23.8	-12.1
University of Southern Indiana	IN	Public	1004	35.3%	6.5%	15.5%	23.4	-17.2
University of Nebraska at Omaha	NE	Public	1070	36.1%	6.0%	23.7%	22.6	-10.7
Drexel University	PA	Private Nonprofit	1197	19.5%	5.6%	46.6%	22.2	-18.4
Auburn University	AL	Public	1215	13.0%	9.6%	49.8%	22.0	-15.9
University of Arkansas at Monticello	AR	Public	N/A	70.8%	29.1%	8.1%	21.9	-10.0
Columbia College-Chicago	IL	Private Nonprofit	N/A	39.5%	18.4%	25.4%	21.2	-10.2
Nova Southeastern University	FL	Private Nonprofit	1084	40.1%	21.5%	25.2%	21.1	-16.2
Purdue University-Calumet Campus	IN	Public	975	37.6%	17.2%	13.6%	21.1	-12.6
LIU Brooklyn	NY	Private Nonprofit	921	72.1%	43.6%	19.1%	20.7	-11.2

\*Difference between the institution's grad rate among Black students and the average rate for the institution's CRO peer group. Three-year weighted averages were used.  
Source: Education Trust's analysis of IPEDS and College Results Online database

## ENDNOTES

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10. The number of first-time, full-time bachelor's or equivalent degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled in fall 2008.
11. Graduation rate cohort includes first-time, full-time bachelor's or equivalent degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled in fall 2008.
12. This number (44.6) represents the three-year weighted average black grad rates for all institutions.
13. The number of first-time, full-time bachelor's or equivalent degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled in fall 2008.
14. Graduation rate cohort includes first-time, full-time bachelor's or equivalent degree-seeking undergraduates enrolled in fall 2008.
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16. This graduation rate includes 80 HBCUs that enroll 38,086 first-time, full-time Black undergraduate students or 19.7 percent of all first-time, full-time Black undergraduate students at four-year institutions.
17. Carnegie Classification 24–32.
18. A minimum graduation rate cohort of both 30 Black and 30 White students.

## MORE ABOUT THE DATA

The data used in this report come from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, which is a publicly available database that includes data colleges and universities are required to report annually to the U.S. Department of Education. Our analysis specifically uses institution-level graduation rate data for White and Black full-time, bachelor's degree-seeking students who enrolled at an institution for the first time in the fall of 2008 and completed a bachelor's degree within six years (2014) at that institution. The 2014 graduation rates are the most current rates that are available to the public (as of December 9, 2016).

Our analysis only includes institutions that met the following six criteria:

- Classified as public or private nonprofit,
- Recipient of Title IV funds,
- Not considered a historically Black college or university,
- Located in the 50 states or Washington, D.C.,
- Enrolled first-time, full-time undergraduates in fall 2013, and
- Reported 2013–14 six-year graduation rates for Black and White students in IPEDS.

In total, 1499 institutions fit these criteria; however, we also excluded institutions that:

- Offer specialized curricula<sup>17</sup> and
- Enroll very small numbers of Black or White students.<sup>18</sup>

The 676 institutions we identified included 362 four-year public and 314 four-year, private nonprofit institutions. Together, these institutions served 82.8 percent of the first-time, full-time Black students enrolled at the 1499 institutions that met our six criteria. Within our sample, public institutions enrolled over 75 percent of all the first-time, full-time Black students and private nonprofit institutions enrolled nearly 25 percent of all first-time, full-time Black students.

## **ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST**

The Education Trust promotes high academic achievement for all students at all levels — pre-kindergarten through college. We work alongside parents, educators, and community and business leaders across the country in transforming schools and colleges into institutions that serve all students well. Lessons learned in these efforts, together with unflinching data analyses, shape our state and national policy agendas. Our goal is to close the gaps in opportunity and achievement that consign far too many young people — especially those who are Black, Latino, American Indian, or from low-income families — to lives on the margins of the American mainstream.



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