

A Descriptive Look at College Enrollment and Degree Completion of Baltimore City Graduates

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Policy Brief

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Earning a college degree improves a person's life outcomes in employment, income, health, and quality of life. Thus, it is important to track Baltimore City Schools graduates success in attending and completing college. In this study, we sought to summarize college enrollment and completion trends over the past several years. These data will not only serve as a baseline for comparison with future data, but also allow us to identify areas where additional research and information could inform City Schools efforts to create a college-going climate throughout all its elementary, middle and high schools.

Enrollment

Access to college is dependent on high school graduation or GED completion. Baltimore City has seen a trend of increasing percentages of students both graduating and enrolling in college (see table below). The percent graduating grew from 60.6 to 65.9 from the Class of 2006 to 2010, while the percent enrolling in college grew from 44.7 to 46.7. However, as the number and percent of students graduating from City Schools increases, maintaining improvements in college enrollment will require a redoubling of efforts.

Recent national statistics indicate that about 70% of high school graduates enroll in college immediately after high school graduation, while 54% of low-income students do so.¹ On average, about 48% of Baltimore's recent graduating students enrolled in college immediately after high school graduation.

Number and Rate of Baltimore City Graduates and Fall College Enrollment for the Classes of 2006 through 2010

Class	High School Graduates		Fall College Enrollees	
	Number	Graduation Rate (Leaver)	Number	Percent
2006	4,107	60.6	1,836	44.7
2007	4,111	60.1	1,927	46.9
2008	4,017	62.7	1,921	47.8
2009	4,279	62.7	2,075	48.5
2010	4,421	65.9	2,063	46.7

Source: NSC/MSU data, received January 2011; Leaver rate from MSDE, mdreportcard.org

Over time, the type of schools in which students enroll has changed. More students are now enrolling in 2-year institutions. At the same time, the Barron's selectivity of graduates' 4-year college choices has remained stable with most City Schools graduates enroll in *Somewhat Selective* colleges.

Degree Completion

After six years, 19% of the Class of 2004 who had enrolled in a postsecondary institution earned a 4-year degree and another 4% earned a 2-year degree. Degree completion varied by the institution in which students enrolled. At Baltimore City Community College (BCCC), the college most frequently attended by City Schools' graduates, 3.5% earned a degree by 2010. The most frequently attended 4-year college was Coppin State University; there, 17.3% of enrollees earned degrees within six years. The second most frequently attended 4-year college was

^{1 1} Table A-211, The Condition of Education 2011, National Center for Education Statistics. Accessable at <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/tables/table-trc-1.asp>.

Morgan State University, where 21.0% of enrollees earned degrees within six years.

College Ready

Nationally, a de facto definition of *college ready* is that *remediation is not needed at college entry*. One of the most surprising findings of this study was the inconsistency in local postsecondary institutions' definitions of *college ready*. The table below shows the range of ACCUPLACER cut scores for being *college ready* at local postsecondary institutions.

Local College ACCUPLACER Cut Scores for Determining *College Ready* by College/University*

2-year	ACCUPLACER score [^]		
	Math	Writing	Reading
Baltimore City Comm. College (BCCC)	63 (EA), 45 (CM)	90	79
Comm. College of Baltimore County (CCBC)	70 (EA), 45 (CM)	90	79
Anne Arundel Comm. College (AACC)	83 (EA), 45 (CM)	73	68
4-year			
Coppin State University	108 (EA)	-	86
Morgan State University	Major dependent	98	88
Towson University	109 (EA)	-	80
University of Maryland Eastern Shores (UMES)	108 (EA), 63 (CM)	n/a	70

EA – Elementary Algebra; CM – College Math

* Lowest score possible a student can earn to be placed into credit bearing courses. In some cases, the determination is major-dependent and more complicated than can be shown in this chart.

This has far reaching implications. First, *college ready* is an uneven ruler by which to measure high schools, as the percent needing remediation varies by postsecondary institution. Second, this variance makes advising students about college choice very challenging.

The full technical report provides a more complete discussion of the findings and implications of current college enrollment and degree completion for Baltimore City graduates. The findings presented in the technical report and recent conversations with City Schools leaders have suggested several areas in which targeted efforts would have the greatest impact:

Establish a college-going culture and high academic standards with supports for struggling students. This would have far-reaching benefits for later college success. At all levels, students' academic skills (as well as their non-cognitive skills such as persistence and organization) can be supported via challenging instruction that requires college-like skills such as intensive reading and frequent writing.

Ensure all students receive ongoing, systematic, and deliberate guidance towards a successful college application process.

Engage BCCC and CCBC in a conversation regarding thresholds for taking credit-bearing courses. All institutions would be well served by closer coordination.

For more detail, the full technical report is located at baltimore-berc.org.