

Update to:

From High School to the Future

*A first look at Chicago Public School
graduates' college enrollment, college
preparation, and graduation from
four-year colleges*

October 2006

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Consortium on
CHICAGO SCHOOL RESEARCH
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The Issue

In April 2006, the Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) released a report on college enrollment, preparation, and completion by students in the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). This was the first endeavor in the nation to use data from the National Student Clearinghouse (NSC) to track the progress of a large district's students following their high school graduation. We reported the college graduation rates of CPS alumni who completed high school in 1998 and 1999.

The third chapter of *From High School to the Future* reported college graduation rates that were based on enrollment records in the NSC. Officials at two institutions—the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign (Urbana) and Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (Carbondale)—questioned the graduation rates that we published because their own records showed that substantially higher numbers of CPS students had graduated. With cooperation between Urbana, the CPS Department of Postsecondary Education, and CCSR, we determined that the data obtained from the NSC in July 2005 contained incomplete graduation records for many students from Urbana. Likewise, Carbondale has confirmed that the records sent to the NSC did not contain graduation information for all graduates. Although we were aware of potential problems in the NSC data and had created a system to ensure that the files contained graduation records for the institutions included in our study, we did not foresee the possibility that an institution's records would contain only a partial listing of its graduates in a given year.

In August 2005, Urbana supplied the missing records to NSC when it joined the degree-verification program. The CPS Department of Postsecondary Education received the updated records in January 2006. In July, CCSR received the updated records, which we now use to update the graduation rates originally reported in *From High School to the Future*. With the complete records for Urbana graduates, we now calculate a much higher college graduation rate for CPS students. The correct graduation rate for CPS alumni

at Urbana is 72 percent, as opposed to the 42 percent graduation rate that we originally reported. Urbana's internal records confirm that the graduation rate is correct. Carbondale has not provided updated records to NSC, so we remove Carbondale students from the statistics presented here. According to Carbondale officials, their internal records suggest that the graduation rate for CPS students is about 36 percent.

After discovering a problem at two institutions, we became concerned that graduation records might also be incomplete for other institutions. Therefore, we have closely examined the graduation rates calculated using the NSC data for the ten most popular colleges attended by CPS graduates. Some of these institutions participate in the NSC's degree verification program. For these institutions, we are confident that the NSC records on graduation are accurate. At the remaining institutions, the graduation rates calculated with NSC data exceed the rates that the institutions themselves report for under-represented minorities. This gives us some confidence that the graduation records for the remaining institutions are complete.

Besides containing complete information for Urbana, the new NSC data is different from the data obtained in July 2005 in three other ways. First, more colleges are participating in the NSC, so we can include more colleges and students in our calculation of college graduation rates. The inclusion of DePaul University, in particular, improves the overall college graduation rate of CPS students. Second, a few additional graduation records appear at other colleges, although the number is much smaller than the number of graduation records originally missing from Urbana and Carbondale. This likely reflects a delay in these colleges sending their data to NSC. Third, CPS changed its classification methods for winter graduates, so that some students who were previously coded as graduates from 1999 are now counted with the 1998 cohort, and some students who were considered 2000 graduates are now counted with the 1999 cohort. This increases the number of students used for graduation rates, and allows winter graduates somewhat more than six years to graduate from college (6.5 years, instead of 5.5).

Updated Results with New Data

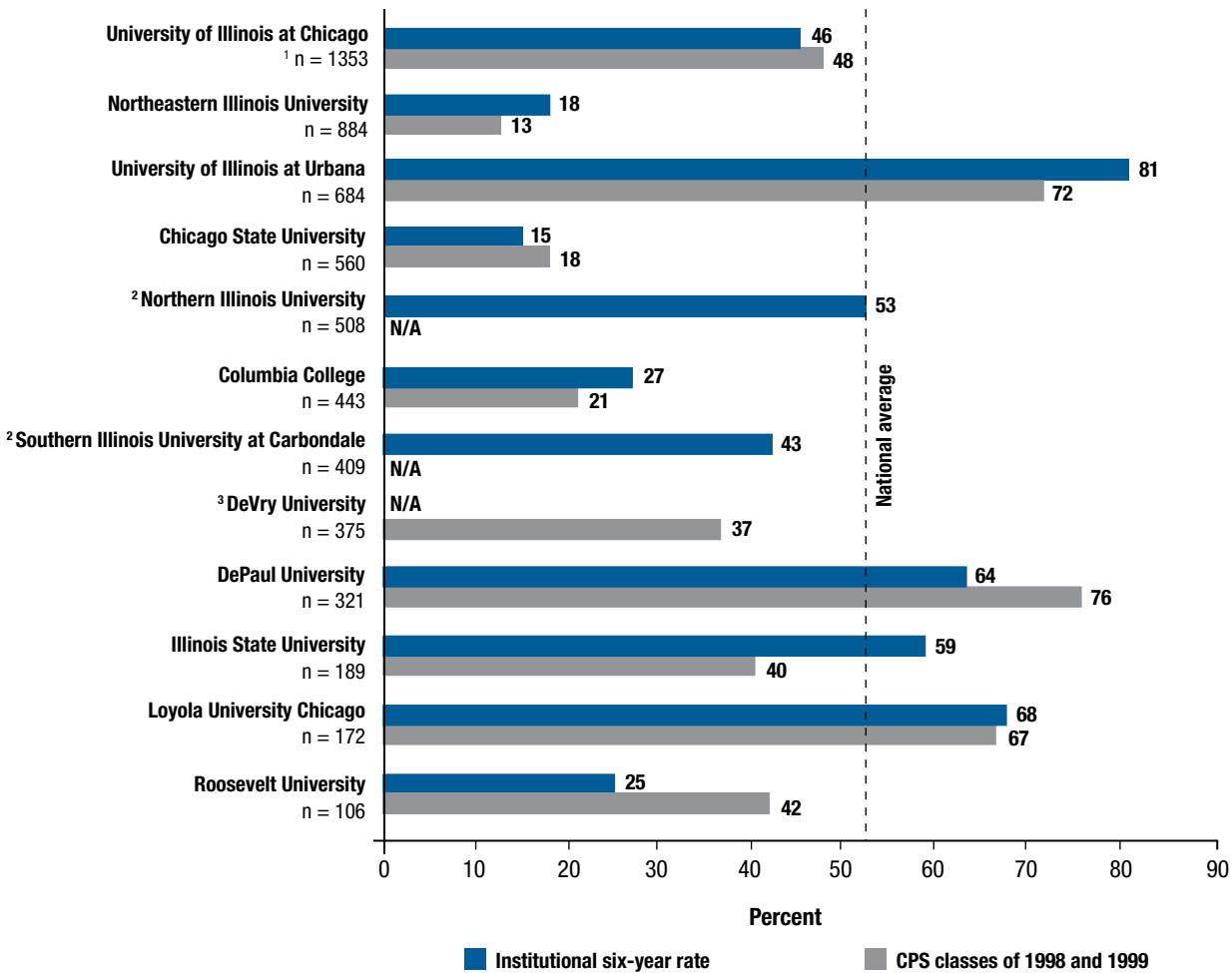
Using this new information, the six-year graduation rate of CPS alumni at Urbana increases from 42 percent to 72 percent. This graduation rate includes those students who began college at Urbana, but graduated from another four-year college (5.5 percent of students). In addition, there are small increases in the graduation rates at other universities because of updated records. See Revised Figure 3-8.

The relationship between high school GPA and the

likelihood of graduating (displayed in Figure 3-12 in the original report) remains the same at all colleges other than Urbana. At Urbana, students at all levels of high school GPA are more likely to graduate than was originally represented. See Revised Figure 3-12 on page 4.

Using the updated data, the overall college graduation rate for CPS alumni increases from 35 percent to 45 percent. See Revised Figure 3-1 on page 5. This is primarily due to the revised graduation rate for Urbana, although other factors also contribute to the increase,

REVISED FIGURE 3-8
Institutional and CPS graduation rates at popular local colleges



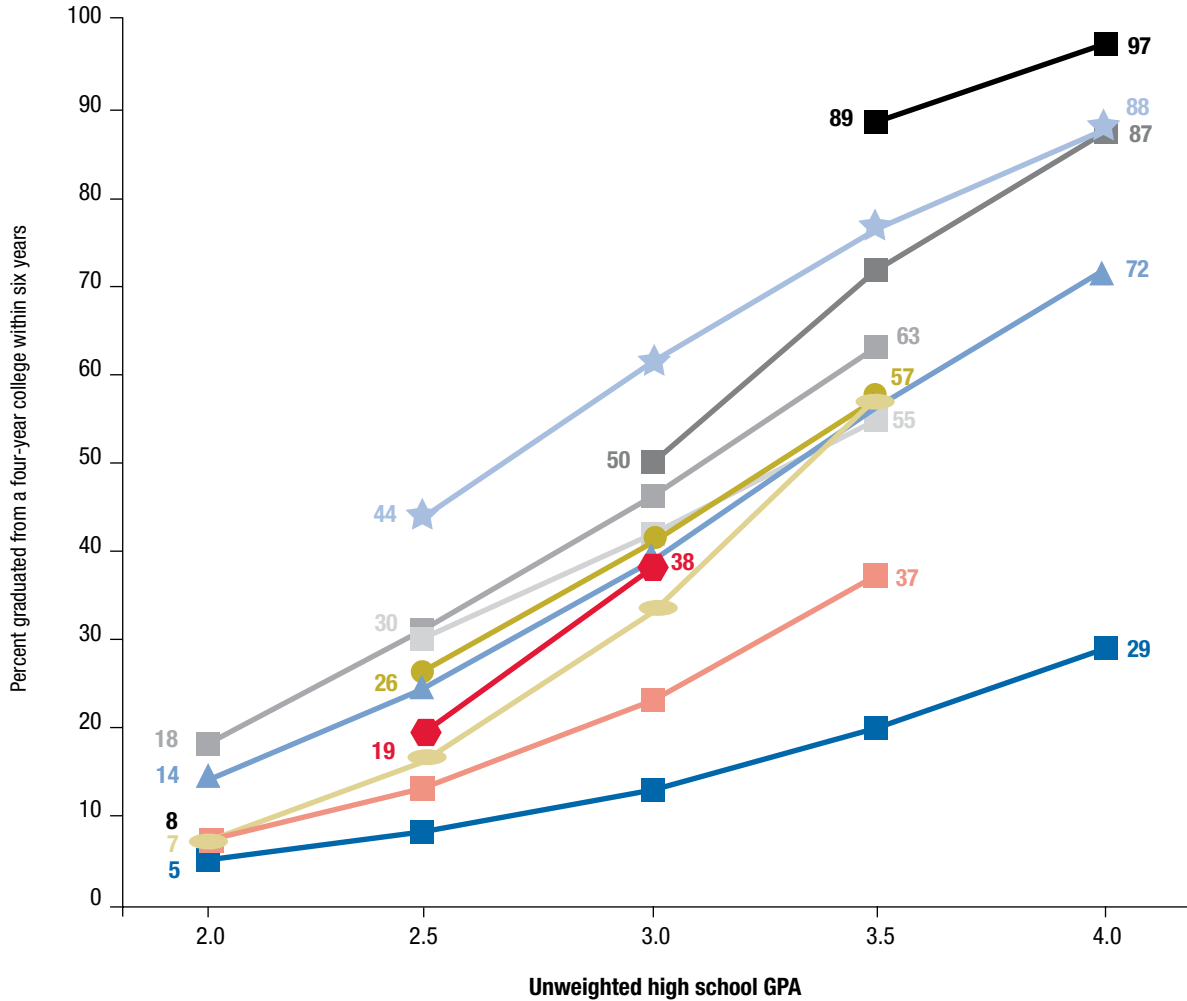
¹ CPS enrollment size (n) is calculated from all students who started at the college, including those removed from calculation of graduation rates because of enrollment/transfer into a college without graduation information. The entire starting class must be used for the enrollment numbers in order to be comparable to those institutions for which we do not have graduation information.

² Prior to 2004, Northern Illinois University reported enrollment information to the NSC but they did not report graduation information. Carbondale does not provide complete information to the NSC. Therefore, we can report the number of students that enrolled in these institutions from CPS, but we cannot report the graduation rates of those students.

³ The institutional graduation rate for DeVry University is not reported on the website of the Education Trust, the source used for institutional graduation rates in this figure.

REVISED FIGURE 3-12

College graduation rates by unweighted high school GPA for popular Illinois colleges



- Northwestern University
- Loyola University Chicago
- DeVry University-Illinois
- Roosevelt University
- Illinois State University
- University of Illinois at Chicago
- University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign
- Western Illinois University
- Columbia College Chicago
- Chicago State University
- Northeastern Illinois University

Note: These lines come from logistic regression models performed for each college, predicting graduation with GPA. The regression lines are based on data from all students at each college based on their actual (not rounded) GPA. However, points are included on the graph for a college only if at least 20 students at that college had a rounded high school GPA at that point. Colleges that enrolled fewer than 40 CPS alumni, such as the University of Chicago, are not shown to protect student confidentiality.

including: 1) small increases in the graduation rates at other schools with updated student records; 2) the removal of Carbondale from these statistics; and 3) the participation of several additional colleges in the NSC, including DePaul University which has a graduation rate of 76 percent. The aggregate statistic of the percentage of students who begin high school in CPS and earn a four-year college degree by their mid-twenties increases just slightly—from 6 to 8 percent.

The racial and gender gaps in college completion remain about the same as in the original report, although all groups have somewhat higher graduation rates with the new data. *See Revised Figure 3-2 on page 6.*

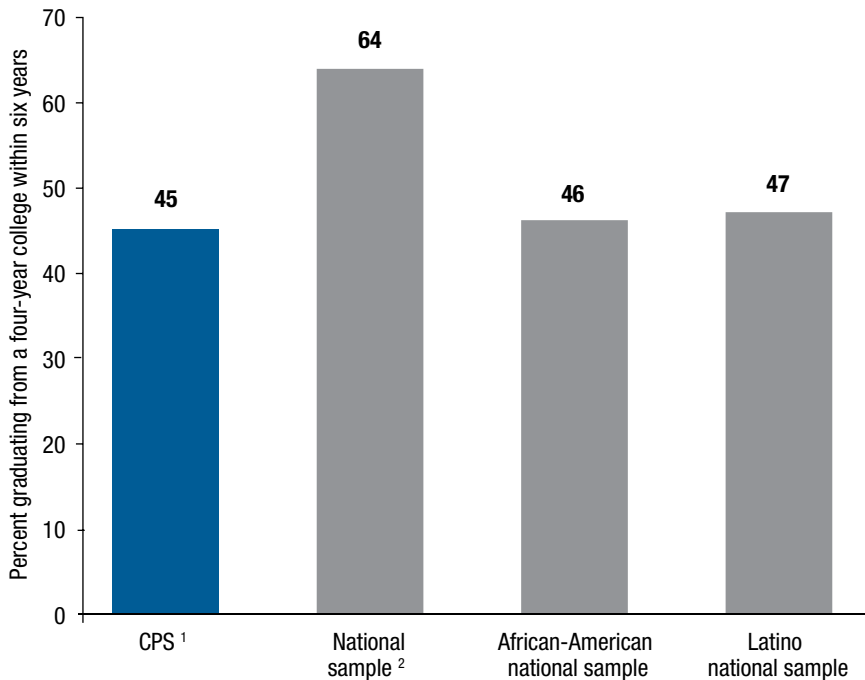
The relationships between college preparation variables and college graduation remain—GPAs matter much more than standardized test scores or coursework in predicting college completion. In fact, the

relationship is even stronger with the new data. As shown in the updated Figure 3-4, of students who enrolled in a four-year college, only 15 percent of the students with a 2.0 or lower high school GPA graduated within six years. On the other hand, 75 percent of students who graduated with an “A” average (3.6 or higher) and enrolled in a four-year college graduated within six years. *See Revised Figure 3-4 on page 6.*

Finally, we wish to point out that, even with the revised data, the six colleges most attended by CPS alumni still show graduation rates that are below average. Only 41 percent of students at the most popular four-year institutions graduated within six years, compared to 49 percent of in-state students at less popular institutions, and 56 percent of students who chose out-of-state colleges.

REVISED FIGURE 3-1

CPS graduates' college graduation rates compared to overall national rates



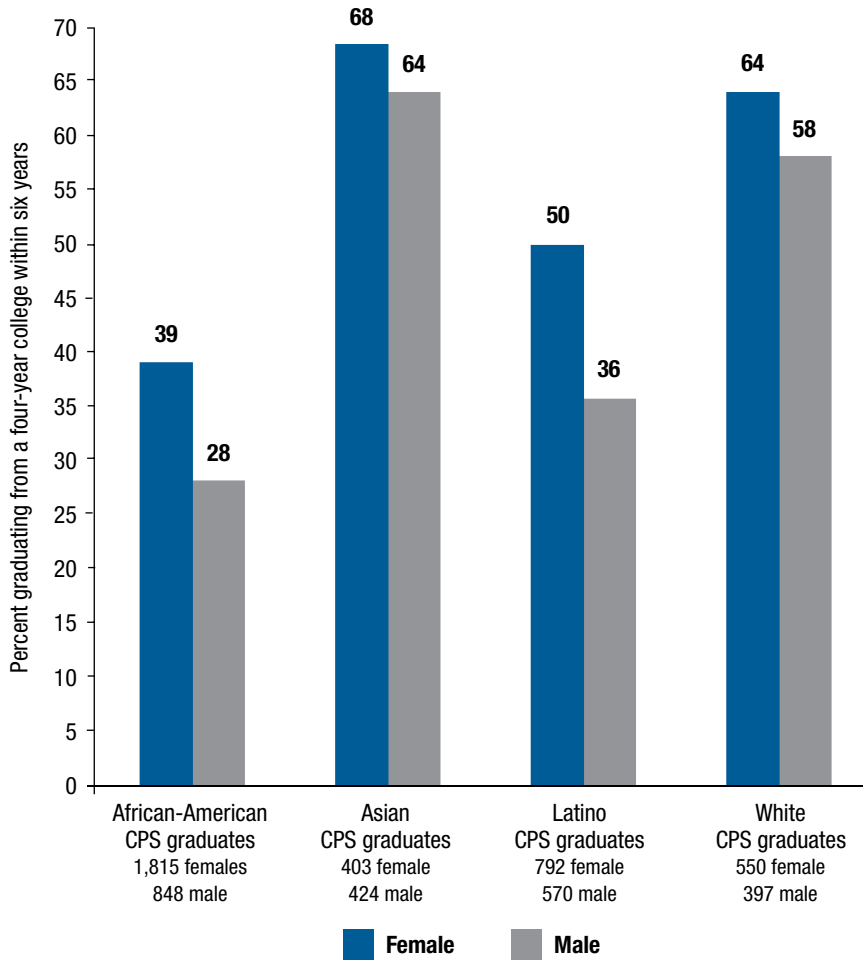
¹ This statistic is calculated from those students who attended a college for which we have graduation information in the NSC database. Students who began college part-time, graduated from an alternative high school, or were eligible for special education services were not included in the statistic.

² U. S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. 2002. Descriptive Summary of 1995-96 Beginning Postsecondary Students: Six Years Later, NCEES 2003-151. Lutz Berkner, Shirley He, and Emily F. Cataldi. Paula Knepper (project officer). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Note: For national comparisons we use enrollment by October. For all other statistics we use enrollment by spring (one year after high school graduation).

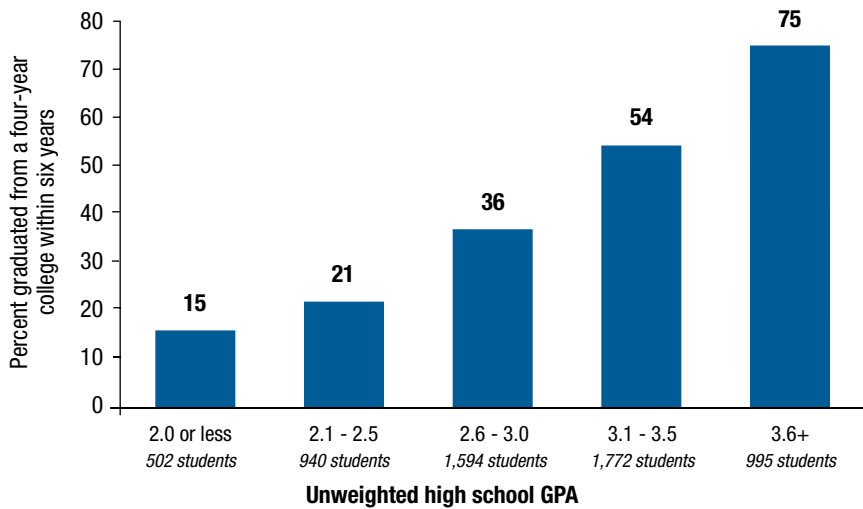
REVISED FIGURE 3-2

Six-year college graduation rates by race/ethnicity and gender



REVISED FIGURE 3-4

College graduation rates by unweighted high school GPA



Note: These were CPS alumni who enrolled full time in a four-year college by spring following their high school graduation and enrolled in a college for which we have graduation information.

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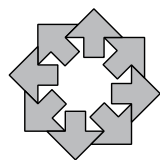
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The Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR) at the University of Chicago aims to conduct research of high technical quality that can inform and assess policy and practice in the Chicago Public Schools. By broadly engaging local leadership in our work, and presenting our findings to diverse audiences, we seek to expand communication among researchers, policy makers, and practitioners. The Consortium encourages the use of research in policy action, but does not argue for particular policies or programs. Rather, we believe that good policy is most likely to result from a genuine competition of ideas informed by the best evidence that can be obtained.



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